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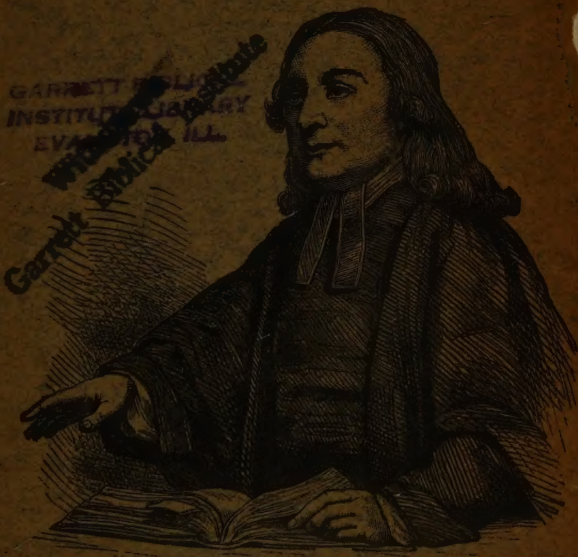
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# John Wesley.

## HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

SCHOLAR  
COLLEGIAN  
CLERGYMAN  
METHODIST  
FAMOUS PREACHER  
MISSIONARY  
THEOLOGIAN  
PRESIDENT.





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# JOHN WESLEY:

HIS LIFE AND WORK.

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BY

JOHN W. KIRTON, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY HOMES AND HOW TO MAKE THEM,"  
"BUY YOUR OWN CHERRIES," ETC.



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# THE LIFE OF WESLEY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *The Child.*

JOHN WESLEY had the advantage of descending from a family who for generations had been eminent for piety and learning. Bartholomew Wesley, his great-grandfather, received his education in one of the Universities, and afterwards held the living of Allington in Dorsetshire. From this however he was for some reason ejected under the "Act of Uniformity," and afterwards had to depend for a living upon his medical knowledge, which from motives of charity he had acquired while acting as pastor to his people.

John, the son of Bartholomew, was educated at Oxford in the time of the Commonwealth, and became eminent for his Oriental knowledge. He was presented to the living of Blandford, from which it appears he also was ejected for his nonconformity. He continued to preach in various places although severely persecuted, and died at the early age of thirty-four years, leaving two sons, of whom Samuel, the younger, John's father, was only eight or nine years old. At an early age he walked to Oxford and entered himself as a poor student at Exeter College, and until he obtained his bachelor's degree had to support himself by giving instruction to more fortunate students. He then went to London, was ordained deacon, and obtained a curacy, which he held for twelve months; when he was appointed chaplain on board the fleet. At the end of another year he returned to London and obtained a second curacy, and married Susannah, daughter of Dr. Annesley, also one of the ejected ministers. Having been one of the first who wrote in defence of the Revolution in 1688, which production he dedicated to Queen

Mary, she rewarded him with a presentation to the living of Epworth, in Lincolnshire, about 1693. This he held for upwards of forty years, when he died respected and beloved by his parishioners.

Of his wife Susannah all who have written about her express but one opinion—that she was a woman of a highly cultured mind, strong understanding, good judgment, and deep piety. As a wife, a mother, and a parent, she exercised a wonderful influence in the formation of those principles which, in after-life, so eminently distinguished her children and specially her sons John and Charles Wesley. Out of her family of nineteen children, nine died in infancy: the name of one of those who died was John, and of another Benjamin; and when the subject of this sketch was born on June 17th, 1703,<sup>1</sup> he was called John Benjamin. It appears however that Wesley himself never used the latter name.

Samuel, his brother, was thirteen years of age when John was born, and a few months afterwards was sent to Westminster School, where he quickly became distinguished for his genius and scholarship. Charles was yet unborn. Of the other members of the family we have not space to speak, except to note that Mehetabel at eight years of age was able to read the New Testament in Greek, and that the gifted and beautiful Emilia, who was a year younger than Samuel, was developing her wonderful powers under the moral and mental cultivation of her mother at home.

Speaking of the mother of the Wesleys Isaac Taylor truly styles her the “mother of Methodism,” inasmuch as by her influence and example she, in a very marked degree, moulded the character and shaped the life, not only of her son John, but also of his brother Charles. Indeed, as one has remarked, when depicting her character, “Her marvellous ability and success in their education and training have won for her a proud, if not a pre-eminent, position among the many illustrious mothers of the wise and good.”

One thing specially conspicuous in her character appears to have been transmitted to her son John. She was a woman of method. Indeed, she seems to have reduced home-training almost to a science. When a child was a year old, it was taught to fear the rod; and by some marvellous secret, which unfortunately she has not handed down to her successors, she managed to teach her little ones

<sup>1</sup> In 1751 the old English calendar was set aside by act of parliament, for the purpose of harmonizing the computation of time in England with the rest of Europe. Since 1752 therefore the anniversary of Wesley's birth has been the 28th of June, and not the 17th.

to "cry softly" if they cried at all. So deeply was John impressed by his mother's habits in this and other respects, that years afterward, in a sermon on the Education of Children, he enforced his mother's practice, and urged parents never to give a child a thing for which it cried, on the ground that to do so would be a recompense for crying, and would therefore lead to the child crying again when it wanted anything.

This clever mother was also very particular about her children's diet, limiting them to three meals a day, all eating and drinking between meals being strictly forbidden. At eight o'clock each child was washed and put to bed, and on no account was a servant permitted to sit by any one of them until it went to sleep.

All her children were taught the Lord's Prayer as soon as they could speak, and had to repeat it every morning and night. They were not allowed to be rude to one another, nor to call each other by name, except with the addition of "brother," or "sister," as the case might be. Every day they had to spend six hours at school, and were never allowed to play or run in the garden without permission. All except one were taught to read before they were five years of age; and then they had to learn the alphabet in one day. Each day commenced and closed by the reading of a portion of Scripture by one of the elder children to the younger, and then they went to their own private devotions. Amid all these duties she wielded such a loving influence over her children that we find that John in after-days speaks in the highest terms of the serenity amid which his mother transacted business, wrote letters, and conversed, surrounded by her thirteen children.

As her children grew up she led them to the study of the essentials of religion by the help of three treatises which she herself prepared for them. These were, "A Manual of Natural Theology," "An Exposition of the Leading Truths of the Gospel," and "A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments." Thus did she train her children; ten of whom attained adult years, and all became devoted Christians, and "died in the Lord."

John appears from his childhood to have been remarkable for his sober and studious disposition, and realized that he must be answerable to his reason and conscience for everything he did. If asked out of the regular way of meals to have anything either in the shape of bread or fruit, he would coolly answer, "I thank you; I will think of it." He was accustomed to argue to such a length, that his father once said, "Child, you think to carry everything by dint

of argument; but you will find how little is ever done in the world by close reasoning."

Such was one of his mental habitudes; but it was accompanied by another—he was remarkable for his consistency and devotion; and his father was so struck with this fact that he admitted him to the communion when he was only eight years of age. Between eight and nine he had an attack of small-pox, which he bore so well that his mother remarked, "Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man; and indeed like a Christian,—without complaint."

When he was between five and six years of age, he had a narrow escape of being burnt to death by a fire which took place at the parsonage. When the fire was first discovered, he and some of the other children were fast asleep in the same room. The nurse being aroused seized Charles, and bade the others follow. All did so, except John, who somehow did not awake. The father, counting heads, found one of the boys missing; and at the same moment a cry was heard from John, who had meantime awoke, and mounted a chest, and was seen standing at the bedroom window. The father dropped upon his knees, completely despairing of the rescue of his child, and commended him to God in prayer. But just at that crisis a man placed himself against the wall, and told another to mount on his shoulders; and a few seconds before the roof fell in with a fearful crash, the boy was safely taken from the window. Truly "a brand plucked from the burning." No wonder when the father received his child safe and sound he said, "Come, neighbours, let us kneel down again and give thanks to God: He has given me all my eight children; let the house go; I am rich enough." It will thus be seen that but for that brave and timely help given by those two working men, in a few moments the future founder of Methodism would have perished, and the mighty work he was enabled to accomplish would have been left undone. On what a seeming trifle at that crisis did the great revival of modern religion seem to depend! But the incident serves to illustrate once more how true is the oft-repeated expression that "man's extremity is God's opportunity."

This providential escape during the destruction of the Rectory, seems to have had a special influence on John's mind, which resulted in his having the conviction that he had a special mission in the world. This impression his mother also shared with him; and as a result she felt called upon to specially consecrate him to God. Two years after we find her making him the subject of one



of her recorded evening meditations. "I do intend," she writes, "to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavour to instil into his mind the principles of Thy true religion, and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success." How largely this prayer was answered, we shall see as we proceed.

Very little more is known of John's childhood: but we can readily conceive that a mother, entertaining such convictions, would be sure daily to do her best to train him up "in the way he should go"; and as a consequence she had the joy of seeing him making rapid progress in his studies, so that he was well-prepared to take a step in advance at an early age. Hence we find that when he was about ten and a half years of age John passed from his home-training to become a pupil at a public school, whither we will now follow him.



## CHAPTER II.

### *The Scholar.*

IN 1714 and while only a child ten and a half years of age, John had to leave home to become a pupil in the Charterhouse School, London. For the great privilege of admission into this noted institution his father was indebted to the Duke of Buckingham, who at that time was Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household. John never lost sight of this boon, and to the day of his death made it a rule to walk through the Charterhouse courts and grounds once every year. While gaining the advantages of such a school however, he had to endure many hardships, which he bore bravely. Among other things for instance, it appears to have been the custom of the elder boys to take by force from the younger ones the animal food which they were allowed; the result was, that for a large part of the five years young Wesley spent at the school, bread was his only solid food. However he secured a good appetite for this by carrying out invariably a strict command which his father had given him—to run round the garden three times every morning; and as it is said to be good for a man to "bear the yoke in his youth," no doubt this discipline and self-

denial had its influence for good upon him in after-days. It was through no fault of his own that he entered school as the poor child of a poor parish clergyman; and though he had to endure wrongs and insults which were neither few nor small, yet by the energy of his character and his indomitable perseverance, he managed to make his way, so that at length he was able to acquire a high position among his fellows; but he confesses that during that period he lost his religion. Concerning this part of his history, he writes: "Outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties; and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was: 1. Not being so bad as other people. 2. Having still a kindness for religion. And, 3. Reading the Bible; going to church; and saying my prayers."

During his residence at this well-known school, news reached him that mysterious and preternatural voices were heard in his father's house. Say what we may, this seemed to have exercised upon his mind from that time a powerful and important influence. To make himself sure as to the facts, he obtained the most minute particulars from his mother and the other members of his family, and he also transcribed his father's diary. All this proves the great and intense interest he felt in the affair. Several instances are given by himself, in which he shows how he came to the conclusion that, wisely or unwisely, he was bound to be a believer in ghosts and apparitions. No doubt these things also helped to mould his character, and served to deepen his impressions of the realities of the unseen world.

Prior to his removal from Charterhouse he had acquired some considerable knowledge of Hebrew, as may be gathered from a letter which his brother Samuel sent to his father, in which he says, "My brother Jack, I can faithfully assure you, gives no manner of discouragement from breeding your third son a scholar. Jack is a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."

It is sometimes a good thing, it is said, to have a friend at court; but it does not always follow that the friend may be willing to use his influence in the direction we may need it. This was the case with John Wesley. It appears, from what he in after-years told Alexander Knox, that his father had composed the well-known speech delivered by Dr. Sacheverell at the close of his trial; and that on

this ground, when John Wesley was about entering Oxford, his father, knowing that the doctor had a strong interest in the college for which his son was devoted, desired John to call on Sacheverell to get letters of recommendation. "When I was introduced," says John Wesley, "I found him alone, as tall as a maypole, and as fine as an archbishop. I was a very little fellow, not taller (pointing to a very gentlemanlike, but very dwarfish clergyman who was in the company) than Mr. Kennedy there. He said: 'You are too young to go to the University. You cannot know Greek or Latin yet. Go back to school.' I looked at him as Goliath looked at David, and despised him in my heart. I thought, 'If I do not know Greek and Latin better than you, I ought to go back to school indeed.' I left him; and neither entreaties nor commands could have brought me again back to him."



## CHAPTER III.

### *The Collegian.*

WESLEY was elected to Christchurch, Oxford, in 1720, and remained there until he was ordained in 1725. During this time he maintained his reputation for scholarship, and continued to pursue his studies with unabated vigour. One says of him, "He appeared the very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the finest classical taste." Or, as Southey remarks, "His skill in logic was great, by which he frequently put to silence those who contended with him in after-life. No man, indeed, was ever more dexterous in the art of reasoning." His great knowledge of the classics gave a smooth polish to his wit and an air of superior finish to his writings. Like the rest of the Wesley family he appears to have been a gay and sprightly companion, full of fun and humour. He began to write poetry; but this was a talent which he forbore to cultivate. He said his prayers, and read good books; but the following was the conclusion to which he came, "Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually and, for the most part, very contentedly, in some or other known sin; though with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the holy communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year."

A story is told by Rev. J. Reynolds in his "Anecdotes of Wesley,"

to the effect that Wesley was deeply moved while at Oxford, by an odd interview which he had with the porter of his college. It appears that the man late one evening went to the young collegian's room and said he wished to talk with him. After a little pleasantry Wesley told him to go home, and get another coat. The porter replied, "This is the only coat I have in the world; and I thank God for it." Wesley said, "Go home and get your supper." The man responded, "I have had nothing to-day but a drink of water; and I thank God for that." Wesley remarked, "It is late, and you will be locked out; and then what will you have to thank God for?" "I will thank Him," replied the porter, "that I have the dry stones to lie upon." "John," said Wesley, "you thank God when you have nothing to wear, nothing to eat, and no bed to lie upon. What else do you thank Him for?" "I thank Him," returned the poor fellow, "that He has given me life and being; and a heart to love Him, and a desire to serve Him." Reynolds adds that this was related by Wesley himself, and that the interview convinced him at the time that there was something in religion to which he was then a stranger.

Wesley's health when he went to Oxford was far from being strong: on the contrary he was frequently troubled with bleeding at the nose; and in a letter to his mother in 1723 he tells her that while walking in the country, he had bled so violently, that he was almost choked, nor could he at all abate the hæmorrhage till he stripped himself and leaped into the river. Referring to this period of his life in after-years he says: "I can hardly believe that I am this month entered into the 68th year of my age! How marvellous are the ways of God! How He has kept me even from a child! From ten to thirteen or fourteen, I had little but bread to eat, and not great plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me, that it laid the foundation of lasting health. When I grew up, in consequence of reading Dr. Cheyne, I chose to eat sparingly and drink water. This was another great means of continuing my health till I was about twenty-seven. I then began spitting of blood, which continued several years. A warm climate cured that. I was afterwards brought to the brink of death by a fever; but it left me healthier than before. Eleven years after, I was in the third stage of a consumption; in three months after it pleased God to remove this also. Since that time I have known neither pain nor sickness, and am now healthier than I was forty years ago! This hath God wrought." And writing, he observes again: "I am as strong at eighty-one as I was at twenty-one; but



abundantly more healthy, being a stranger to the headache, tooth-ache, and other bodily disorders which attended me in my youth." "To-day I entered on my eighty-second year; found myself just as strong to labour and as fit for exercise in body and mind, as I was forty years ago." Also at eighty-three he remarks: "I am a wonder to myself: it is now twelve years since I felt any sensation of weariness. I am never tired (such is the goodness of God) either with writing, preaching, or travelling; one natural cause undoubtedly is—my continual exercise and change of air."

There was another difficulty he had also to struggle with in early life—he was short of money; and this led him not unfrequently to get into debt. Sometimes he even had to borrow, and in writing to his sisters was obliged to say that though he was "so poor he would be able to spare the postage for a letter now and then." All that he had to depend upon was the £40 per year which belonged to him as a Charterhouse student; which it is easy to see was, even with the greatest economy, totally insufficient to meet all his expenses as a young Oxford student. He wrote home, and was often cheered by the wise words of his mother, and her hearty promises of help. His tutor also made his fees as low as possible. Still he found it difficult to make both ends meet, as will be seen from the following remarks to his mother in November, 1724, when speaking of a collegian of his acquaintance being robbed of his cap and wig, while standing at the door of a coffee-shop; he adds: "I am pretty safe from such gentlemen; for unless they carry me away, carcass and all, they would have a poor purchase."

After Wesley had been more than four years at college he began to think seriously of entering into holy orders and becoming a minister of Christ, but felt some scruples as to the motives by which he might be influenced; so he in due course submitted the matter to his parents. Both of them gave him the best advice they could. Even at that period he was too high-principled to seek admission into the ministry merely to obtain a living. However his mother congratulated him on his decision, and said she hoped it proceeded from the operations of God's Holy Spirit; while his father exhorted him to prayer and study in reference to such a step, promising that he would struggle hard to get the money needful to cover the expenses. He tells us himself: "When I was about twenty-two my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. At the same time the providence of God directed me to A Kempis's 'Christian Pattern.' I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that

God's law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and actions. I was, however, angry at À Kempis for being too strict, though I read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before. Meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at and to pray for, inward holiness; so that now, doing so much and living so good a life, I doubted not that I was a good Christian."

To this he added the reading of Taylor's "Holy Living" and "Holy Dying." These and À Kempis seem to have been the first books on practical divinity he read; and to the day of his death were held by him in high esteem. Indeed the first book he published was À Kempis's "Pattern"; and an extract from Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying" forms part of his "Christian Library." As he pored over the pages of these books the contents staggered him. He wrote to his mother; and she with that wonderful tact which seemed to fit her so eminently to guide his inquiring mind wrote him as follows: "And now, in good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, this is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary; all things besides are comparatively little to the purpose of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in any tragedy."

The more he read, the deeper his convictions became. He could not accept all that Jeremy Taylor said; and indeed when he declared that Christians could not usually know whether they were accepted of God, Wesley at once replied in the true spirit, which afterwards became so prominent in his teaching: "If we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, which He will not do unless we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, in this life we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation! Humility is,

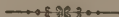
undoubtedly, necessary to salvation ; and if all these things are essential to humility, who can be humble ? who can be saved ? But we can never be so certain of the pardon of our sins as to be assured they will never rise up against us, I firmly believe. We know that they will infallibly do so, if we apostatize ; and I am not satisfied what evidence there can be of final perseverance, until we have finished our own course. But I am persuaded we may know if we are *now* in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised in the holy Scriptures to our sincere endeavours ; and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity."

Not only did he thus clearly indicate his belief in the "Witness of the Spirit," but he also appears to have been equally clear in his own mind with respect to the doctrines of grace. He wrote with reference to Faith as follows: "As I understand Faith to be an assent to any truth upon rational grounds, I do not think it possible, without perjury, to swear I believe anything unless I have reasonable grounds for my persuasion. Now that which contradicts reason cannot be said to stand upon reasonable grounds ; and such, undoubtedly, is every proposition which is incompatible with the Divine justice or mercy. What then shall I say of Predestination ? If it was inevitably decreed from eternity that a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none besides, then a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine justice or mercy ? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery ? Is it just to punish a man for crimes which he could not but commit ? That God should be the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the Divine nature and perfections." It will thus be seen that his tendency to Arminianism was early manifested, just as his dissent from Calvinism was equally decided.

These books of À Kempis and Jeremy Taylor became his daily companions. His letters show that the reading of them had a marked effect upon him. The result was, he resolved, he says, instantly to dedicate all his life to God, all his thoughts, and words, and actions—being thoroughly convinced there is no medium ; that not only a part, but the whole, must either be a sacrifice to God or himself, "that is, in effect to the devil," a sentiment which marked very clearly the whole of his future life. In this way these books became practically the turning point in his life ; although it was not until thirteen years

after that he was fully conscious of being saved. Meantime Wesley prepared himself with the most conscientious care for the ministerial office, and was ordained deacon on Sunday, September 19th, 1725, by Bishop Potter, who, although he was the son of a Yorkshire linen-draper, became a man of great talent and immense learning. Such was Wesley's high esteem of his friendship, that to the day of his death he called him that "great and good man, who gave me advice for which I had ever afterwards to bless God." "If you desire," he had said, "to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature, but *in testifying against open notorious vice and in promoting real, essential holiness.*"

After being ordained, Wesley preached his first sermon at South Leigh, a small village three miles from Witney, no doubt little dreaming that he was then entering upon a work which was to result in such mighty issues, some of which we shall be able to take a brief glance at as we proceed onward with the record of his life.



## CHAPTER IV.

### The Clergyman.

IN the spring of 1726 Wesley offered himself for a fellowship at Lincoln College, and notwithstanding considerable opposition he was elected. His mother with a full heart thanked Almighty God for his "good success." The room occupied by Wesley is still designated "Wesley's room," and a vine creeping round its window is called "Wesley's vine." It also appears that he was able at that time to say he was out of debt, although yet too poor to have his hair cut by the barber. A few weeks later he obtained leave of absence from Lincoln College and spent the summer at Epworth and Wroote with his parents, and assisted his father in his ministerial duties. While on this visit he wrote his paraphrase of the 104th Psalm. The following extract will show that had he cultivated his poetic talent, he would have attained a good position among our poets :

"Thou, brooding o'er the realms of night,  
The unbottomed, infinite abyss;  
Bad'st the deep her rage surcease,  
And saidst, 'Let there be light!'

"Ethereal light Thy call obeyed,  
Glad she left her native shade;  
Darkness turned his murmuring head,  
Resigned the reins and trembling fled."

Notwithstanding the fact that his mother had advised him to "make poetry your diversion, but not your business," it is well known that some of the best hymns to be found in the Wesleyan Hymn-book were written by John Wesley, such as—

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness."

"Father of all, whose powerful voice."

"Thou hidden love of God."

"Commit thou all thy griefs."

Etc., etc.

He returned to Oxford in September, and in the following November was elected Greek Lecturer and Moderator of the Classes, thus proving that, although he was only in the twenty-third year of his age, his literary character was firmly established. In a letter to his mother he tells her "that there are many truths it is not worth while to know. If we had a dozen centuries of life allowed us, we might perhaps, be pardoned for spending a little time upon such curious trifles; but, with the small pittance of life we have, it would be great ill-husbandry to spend a considerable part of it in what makes neither a quick nor a sure return."

About the time of his ordination, while watching with a college friend a young lady's funeral, he attempted to persuade his friend to become a Christian. The result was that from that time his friend became serious, but in a fortnight died of consumption. Wesley was with him three days before he passed away, and at his request buried him, and preached his funeral sermon. This was *Wesley's first convert*; who shall tell who will be the last? Meantime all we can do is to join with Rev. L. Tyerman, who, in his "Life of Wesley," asks the reader to "think of twelve millions of people at present enjoying the benefits of Methodist instruction; let him think of Methodism's 21,875 ordained ministers, and of its tens of thousands of lay-preachers; let him think of the immense amount of its Church property, and of the well-nigh countless number of its Church publications; let him think of millions of young people in its schools, and of its missionary agents almost all the wide world over; let him think of its incalculable influence upon other Churches, and of the unsectarian institutions to which it has given



rise; and then let him say whether the bold suggestion already made is not strictly true, *viz.* that *Methodism is the greatest fact in the history of the Church of Christ.*"

About this time he appears to have removed to Lincoln College, and says: "I began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins. I advised others to be religious, according to that scheme of religion by which I modelled my own life. But meeting now with Mr. Law's "Christian Perfection," and "Serious Call," although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help; resolved, as I had never done before, not to prolong the time of disobeying Him. And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation." It will thus be seen that Wesley was under deep convictions; and the result of reading these two books appears to have deepened these feelings, for he says, "I was convinced more than ever of the impossibility of being half a Christian, and determined to be all devoted to God, to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance."

He now began to spend several hours every day in reading the Scriptures in the original tongues; and yet he tells us that it was not until years after that he fully realized the great truth with which his name now stands so well recognized; *viz.* Justification by faith, leading to a holy life. True, he preached from time to time other great truths; but these were the *chief* doctrines which marked his teaching, and which practically gave birth to the organization with which his name is identified.

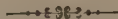
He also adopted another rule which, after threescore years, he tells us he had to bless God for. He took steps to rid himself of unprofitable friends. He says of this: "When it pleased God to give me a settled resolution to be not a *nominal*, but a *real* Christian (being then about twenty-two years of age), my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference. I faintly endeavoured to help them, but in vain. Meantime, I found, by sad experience, that even their *harmless* conversation, so-called, damped all my good resolutions. I saw no possible way of getting rid of them, unless it pleased God to remove me to

another college. He did so. . . . I was elected Fellow of a college where I knew not one person. . . . I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice; and to choose such only as would help me on my way to heaven." Wise resolution! Happy would it be for the world if all men would come to the same determination!

On February 14th, 1727, Wesley took his degree of Master of Arts. He delivered three lectures on the occasion, which led to his acquiring considerable reputation. He appears also to have laid down a definite plan of study for his daily guidance. Mondays and Tuesdays he devoted to the Greek and Roman classics, historians, and poets; Wednesdays, to Logic and Ethics; Thursdays, to Hebrew and Arabic; Fridays, to Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy; Saturdays, to Oratory and Poetry, chiefly composing; and Sundays, to Divinity. Intermediate hours he devoted to perfect himself in French, sometimes amusing himself with experiments in Optics, and from time to time taking up Euclid, Sir Isaac Newton, and other writers on Mathematics. In the month of August he left Oxford for Wroote, one of his father's livings, to officiate as curate, where he continued about two years, discharging the ordinary duties of a country parish clergyman. With what results Wesley tells us: "I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour: indeed, it could not be that I should, for I neither laid the foundation of Repentance, nor of Believing the Gospel; taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance." It is probable that he might have continued there for some time had he not been summoned back to Oxford to discharge his functions as a Fellow. Meantime he had been ordained priest by Dr. Potter; but nothing of special note is worthy of recording connected with his stay at Wroote.<sup>1</sup> It was an uninteresting place. The parsonage was, according to his brother Samuel's description, roofed with thatch, and made lively by the wrangle of "kittens and whelps, pigs and porkets, bellowing kine and bleating lambs, quacking ducks and fluttering hens." The church was small; the population under three hundred; and as for the character of the inhabitants, Wesley's sister, Mehetabel, described them as "unpolished wights," as "dull as asses," and with heads "as impervious as stones." Certainly we may, without any difficulty, come to the conclusion

<sup>1</sup> A small parish attached to the Epworth living.

that it was not a very likely spot to kindle much earnestness in the young curate's spirit, or help him to feel there was much scope for the exercise of his poetic genius, or the development of his classic lore. But, after all, there is every reason to believe that Wesley was as happy as he could be in the retirement of his country charge.



## CHAPTER V.

### *The High Churchman.*

THERE is abundance of evidence to prove that John Wesley was, as Mr. Tyerman says, "in point of fact, a Puseyite, a hundred years before Dr. Pusey flourished." We can however only glance at a few facts which will help to throw light upon this aspect of his character. During his early days at Oxford there are letters which clearly show that he contemplated forming a society which should strictly observe saints' days, holidays, and Saturdays, besides other ritualistic practices, down to superstitious admixture of sacramental wine with water.

During his residence at Savannah (1736) he was even looked upon as a Roman Catholic: (1) Because he rigidly excluded all dissenters from the holy communion, until they first gave up their faith and principles and submitted to be baptized by him. (2) Because Roman Catholics were received by him as saints. (3) Because he endeavoured to establish and enforce confession, penance, and mortification; mixed wine with water at the sacrament, and appointed deaconesses in accordance with what he called the Apostolic Constitutions. Twelve years after he gives us himself a clear specimen of his high Church bigotry and intolerance. Having inserted in his "Journal" a letter written to him by Mr. Bolzius, he says: "What a truly Christian piety and simplicity breathes in these lines! And yet this very man when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord's table because he was not baptized; that is, not baptized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can any one carry high Church zeal higher than this? How well have I been since beaten with mine own staff!"

It is therefore not surprising to find that the new colony of Savannah could not endure these high Church notions, nor would they submit to the earnestness with which Wesley preached against everything which did not seem to him to harmonize with these



views. The result was that he had to encounter much opposition, until at length, he says, "I shook off the dust of my feet, and left Georgia."

It is significant to note how tenaciously, and for how long a time, Wesley clung to these high Church fancies. Like Luther, he seemed ever to have the idea that there was something inherently precious in the Church, apart from its manifold corruptions. Their brother-in-law, Mr. Westley Hall, in 1745 wrote a long letter to the two Wesleys, urging them to renounce the Church of England. This Wesley was not prepared to do, and replied in language which in these days appears to be almost unaccountable. Among other things he said :—

"We believe it would not be right for us to administer either baptism or the Lord's supper, unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom *we apprehend to be in a succession from the apostles.*

"We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not), an outward priesthood ordained by Jesus Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein, by men authorized to act as ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"We believe that the threefold order of ministers is, not only authorized by its apostolic institution, but also by the written word.

"We allow that many of the laws, customs, and practices of the Ecclesiastical Courts are really indefensible; but we no more look upon these filthy abuses, which adhere to our Church, as part of the building, than we look upon any filth which may adhere to the walls of Westminster Abbey as a part of that structure.

"We will obey all the laws of that Church (such as we allow the rubrics to be, but not the customs of the Ecclesiastical Courts), so far as we can with a safe conscience; and with the same restriction we will obey the bishops, as executors of those laws; but their bare will, distinct from those laws, we do not profess to obey at all.

"Field preaching is contrary to no law which we profess to obey; nor are we clear that the allowing lay-preachers is contrary to any such law. But if it is, this is one of the exempt cases; one wherein we cannot obey with a safe conscience."

Notwithstanding the fact that he evidently was so unwilling to give up these notions, yet in the course of time events so conspired together that he was obliged to do so; and, strange to say, even then

he did so rather as a matter of expediency than of choice. It came about in this manner at the Conference of 1784. It was determined, owing to difficulties of the members of the Methodists in America, to send out some help to them. Neither the Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists, would administer the ordinances of baptism or the Lord's supper to them, unless they were willing to renounce their connection with Mr. Wesley, and join their respective Churches. These necessities were met on the part of some of the preachers, who took upon themselves to administer the sacraments. This led to a division among them: the party separating chose from among themselves three senior brethren, who ordained others by the imposition of hands, but by a subsequent vote of the Conference the ordination was declared invalid. This left the people in the same difficulty.

On this state of things being reported to Mr. Wesley, he felt at once extremely anxious about the thousands of children who were unbaptized, and also for the members who were unable to partake of the Lord's supper; so he resolved upon drawing up a plan of Church government, and establishing an ordination for his American societies. This was done. Some of Wesley's warmest friends considered it however as an unwarrantable stretch of authority, calculated to bring innumerable evils upon Methodism, while others regarded it as the long-looked-for throwing-off of allegiance to the Church, and renunciation of its authority. Wesley, however, did not by any means regard it in this light. True, he appears to have been convinced in 1756 by reading Lord King's book on the Primitive Church, that "bishops and presbyters are of the same order," and consequently have the same right to ordain; and viewing his people in America "as sheep without any shepherd," destitute of the ordinances of God and religion, he resolved to exercise his authority, with which he believed himself invested. "For many years," he observes, "I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belong." And in reply to his brother Charles, whose high Church notions were even stronger than his own, and who felt greatly shocked at this step, he says: "I firmly believe that I am a Scriptural *ἐπίσκοπος*, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove. But this does in no wise interfere with my remaining in the Church of England," Yea, at this very Conference

he wrote: "Finding a report had been spread abroad that I was going to leave the Church, to satisfy those that were grieved concerning it, I openly declared in the evening that I had no more thought of separating from the Church than I had forty years ago."

It will thus be seen that, with a pertinacity which was part of his nature, he clung to the Church of England, although at the same time he felt obliged over and over again to do violence to the recognized rules and regulations by which her ministers were expected to manifest their allegiance.

It seems strange that side by side with Wesley's firm attachment to the Church of England, he held opinions and adopted practices so opposed to its leading principles. Yet so it was. What, for instance, could be more unlike a Churchman than to go to Canterbury, with its cathedral, to open a Methodist chapel in August, 1764? Yet so he did; and, what was still more extraordinary, he took advantage of the occasion to utter sentiments which, to the Archbishop, must have appeared rather unlike a clergyman of the Establishment. He said: "I went to Canterbury and opened a new chapel there. How is it that many Protestants, even in England, do not know that no other consecration of church or chapel is allowed, much less required, in England, than the performance of public worship therein? This is the only consecration of any Church in Great Britain which is necessary, or even lawful. It is true Archbishop Laud composed a form of consecration; but it was never allowed, much less established, in England. Let this be remembered by all who talk so idly of preaching in unconsecrated places!" In 1772, when opening another chapel at Poplar, he writes almost the same words.

Again, December 25th, 1774, we find Wesley saying, "During the twelve festival days, we had the Lord's supper daily, as a little emblem of the primitive Church"; and Mr. Tyerman very significantly asks, "Was this a lingering element of Wesley's high-Churchism? What would be said of the Methodists of the present day were they to imitate the example of their founder?"

Again in his sermon at the laying of the foundation stone of the chapel in City Road in 1777, while reviewing the history of Methodism and contrasting the conduct of Whitefield and others, he says, "We do not, we will not, form any separate sect, but from principle remain, what we always have been, true members of the Church of England."

At Dublin in 1778 at the Conference, while debating the duty

of leaving the Establishment, he says, "But, after a full discussion of the point, we all remained firm in our judgment,—that it is not our duty to leave the Church, wherein God has blessed us, and does bless us still."

Again in 1783 he says: "In my Journals, in the magazine, in every possible way, I have advised the Methodists to keep to the Church. They that do this must prosper best in their souls; I have observed it long. If ever the Methodists in general were to leave the Church, I must leave them." As Tyerman adds, "For five-and-forty years he had been branded as a schismatic and a dissenter; but he was still an ardent Churchman." In a tract he published in 1764, entitled "A Short History of Methodism," among other things he says: "Those who remain with Mr. Wesley are most Church of England men. They love her articles, her homilies, her liturgy, her discipline; and unwillingly vary from it in any instance. All who preach among them declare: 'We are all by nature children of wrath. But by grace we are saved through faith; saved both from the guilt and from the power of sin.' They endeavour to live according to what they preach—to be plain *Bible Christians*. And they meet together, at convenient times, to encourage one another therein. They tenderly love many that are Calvinists, though they do not love their opinions. Yea, they love the Antinomians themselves, but it is with a love of compassion only. For they hate their doctrines with a perfect hatred; they abhor them as they do hell-fire; being convinced nothing can so effectually destroy all faith, all holiness, and all good works."

Again in 1766 he says: "I see clearer and clearer, none will keep to us, unless they keep to the Church. Whoever separates from the Church will separate from the Methodists."

This was, as Mr. Tyerman says, "one of the ghosts which haunted Wesley's life."

At the very first Conference over which Wesley presided in 1744, it was resolved to defend the doctrine of the Church of England both by their preaching and living; to obey the bishops in all things indifferent, and to observe the canons as far as they could with a safe conscience; and, finally, to exert themselves to the utmost not to entail a schism in the Church, by their hearers forming themselves into a distinct sect; though they agreed that they must not neglect the present opportunity of saving souls, for fear of consequences which might possibly, or probably, happen after they were dead." We thus see that Wesley had the idea that "something

might happen," and wisely laid the basis wide enough for any emergency that might occur even after he had gone to his reward.

It is also frankly admitted by Stevens in his "History of Methodism," that while Wesley established the American episcopacy, he did not approve the use of the title "Bishop," because of the adventitious dignities associated to it; and this notwithstanding the fact that Methodism in America had been in existence nearly four years under the express title of "Episcopal Church," with the uninterrupted approbation of Wesley until the title of "Bishop" had been personally applied to their superintendents. Writing to Asbury (the first American Methodist bishop), he says:

"But in one point, my dear brother, I am afraid both the doctor [Dr. Coke] and you differ from me. I study to be *little*; you study to be *great*: I *creep*; you *strut* along: I found a *school*: you a *college*; nay, and call it after your own names. Oh, beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all. One instance of this, your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you—how dare you—suffer yourself to be called *Bishop*? I shudder, I start, at the very thought. Men call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall *never* by my consent, call me a *Bishop*! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full stop to this. Let the Presbyterians do what they please; but let the Methodists know their calling better."

It is remarkable in how many instances Wesley was by force of circumstances led to the adoption of things which have proved of immense benefit, not only to Methodism, but also to the world at large. Take for instance the following. Wesley was arranging to leave London, and appointed Maxfield to meet the Society at the usual times, to pray with them, and to give them such advice as he might deem needful. In consequence of Maxfield's special power with the people, a large number came to hear his addresses, and he was led unintentionally to go further than he at first proposed, and began to preach. This soon led some to complain of his "irregularity," and Wesley had to return to London to put an end to it.

His mother, who happened at the time to be living in his house adjoining the Foundry,<sup>1</sup> asked him what was the cause of his anxiety; to which he answered, "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find." Looking at him very seriously she said: "John,

<sup>1</sup> The Foundry in Moorfields, originally used by the government for casting cannon, but now disused, was secured by Wesley in 1739, and became the London head-quarters of Methodism.



you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as assuredly called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." Wesley took this sensible advice, and as a result, "his prejudices bowed before the force of truth, and he could only say, 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good'; and from that moment lay-preaching became a part of Methodism.

He stood by these convictions down to the very end of his life; and when charged in 1790, when he was eighty-seven years of age, with having already separated himself from the Church of England by "preaching abroad," by "praying extempore," by "forming Societies," and by "employing lay-preachers," he replies: "All this is not separating from the Church. So far from it; that, whenever I have opportunity, I attend the Church service myself, and advise all our Societies to do so. Nevertheless the generality even of religious people naturally think, 'I am inconsistent.' And they cannot but think so, unless they observe my two principles. The one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to *vary* from it in the points above-mentioned. I say, Put these two principles together: first, I will not *separate* from the Church; yet, secondly, in cases of necessity, I will *vary* from it; and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my profession from 1730 to this day." He thus, according to his own confession, lived and died a hearty—though to the minds of most thinking people, an inconsistent—Churchman.

It will thus be seen that by a strange confusion of ideas on the part of Wesley, he firmly clung to the notion that the Church of England was the head of all his operations, although he in so many ways acted in defiance of her laws, usages, and authority. How he reconciled these things it is difficult to understand. One thing however is clear, that his heart was larger than his opinions; and whenever the subject of saving souls came up for consideration, he was ready to sacrifice his opinions, if by so doing the accomplishment was secured of that great end for which all Churches profess to exist, whether called by one name or another. It is not surprising to find that the same earnest missionary spirit which marked Wesley has also more or less shown itself among those who were intimately associated with him in his great

work. His example was contagious; his spirit was breathed upon his fellow-labourers. That this was so may be gathered from the cheerful and hearty testimony he bears to their worth in the following words: "They were simple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, seeking no honour, no profit, no pleasure, no ease, but merely to *save souls*; fearing neither want, pain, persecution, nor whatever man could do unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy."



## CHAPTER VI.

### *The Methodist.*

THOROUGHLY to appreciate the importance of the work which Wesley commenced, it is needful to call attention to the moral and spiritual condition of the people at the time. Without this being taken into account, it is impossible to form a just estimate of the greatness of the results which have been accomplished, or the unique character of the man by whom, under God, they were secured.

All writers are agreed that it was a period of general decline in the Church. To use Wesley's own words: "It was just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, that two or three clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance." And again he asks: "What is the present characteristic of the English nation? It is ungodliness. Ungodliness is our universal, our constant, our peculiar character." Even the celebrated Dr. Watts in the preface to his "Humble Attempt toward the Revival of Practical Religion," says that there was "a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men"; that "this declension of piety and virtue" was common among dissenters and Churchmen; that it was, "a general matter of mournful observation among all who lay the cause of God to heart"; and he called upon "every one to use all just and proper efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world."

Another says: "The present modish turn of religion looks as if we began to think that we have no need of a Mediator, but that all our concerns were managed with God as an absolute God. The religion of nature makes up the darling topic of our age; and the

religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is distinctively Christian, or that is peculiar to Christ—everything concerning Him, that has not its apparent foundation in natural light, or that goes beyond its principles—is waived, banished, and despised.”<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Secker in one of his Charges in 1738 declares: “In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age. Such,” he declares, “are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal.” He further adds that “Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all.” This testimony is all the more remarkable and convincing, when it is remembered that it was made *but one year before Methodism was really commenced*.

It is only by occupying this standpoint that a proper view of the subject can be taken. If this is done then it will be clearly seen, as Isaac Taylor tells us, that “Methodism, even when considered apart from its consequences, must always be thought worthy of the most serious regard; that, in fact, that great religious movement has, immediately or remotely, so given an impulse to Christian feeling and profession on all sides, that it has come to present itself as the starting-point of our modern religious history; that the field-preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, in 1739, was the event whence the religious epoch, now current, must date its commencement; that back to the events of that time must we look, necessarily, as often as we seek to trace to its source what is most characteristic of the present time; and that yet this is not all, for the Methodism of the past age points forward to the next-coming development of the powers of the gospel.”

Isaac Taylor again, in his “Wesley and Methodism,” also truly says, that when Wesley appeared the Anglican Church was “an ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism, or a state scarcely to be distinguished from it”; and that Methodism “preserved from extinction and re-animated the languishing nonconformity of the last century, which, just at

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Guyse’s Twelve Sermons at Coward’s Lecture, 1729.



the time of the Methodist revival, was rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books."

It is altogether a mistake to suppose that the Methodist movement began with John Wesley. It really began with his brother Charles, while John was away at Wroote. It appears that a little society had been formed by Charles and two or three undergraduates for the purpose of assisting each other in their studies and the proper use of their time; the regularity of their behaviour led one of the young collegians to call them "Methodists"; and as the name, says Wesley, "was new and quaint, it clave to them immediately; and, from that time, all that had any connection with them were thus distinguished." They met together every night to review what each had done during the day, and to consult with one another what should be done the day following; each meeting opened with prayer and closed with a frugal supper. They had various plans of operation. Some talked with young students, and tried to rescue them from evil companions; others visited the poor; others took charge of a school; some went to the workhouse; some to the prison: and out of their own scanty incomes these young men provided books, tracts, etc., to help in their work.

After his return from Wroote, John Wesley wrote home with his usual frankness, asking his mother which was the best way to judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure. In her reply we think we can see the principle by which more or less the whole of his after-life was governed. She answered in the following noble words: "Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things—in short, whatever measures the strength of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself." Precious advice, which might be adopted with advantage by all men and women everywhere! No wonder it helped to give a practical character to Wesley's life and sermons in after-days.

By strict watchfulness he overcame the natural impetuosity of his nature, and became remarkable for his child-like simplicity. His charity was unbounded, except by want of means. Indeed, he says, it was the practice of all the Oxford Methodists to give away each year all they had, after providing for their own necessities; and then, as an illustration, he adds, in reference to himself: "One of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on

twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away thirty-two. The third year, receiving ninety pounds, he gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds; still he lived as before on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor all the rest." Among other illustrations of his conscientiousness and liberality may be cited the following. He says: "Many years ago when I was at Oxford, on a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we kept at school), called upon me: I said: 'You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?' She said, 'Sir, this is all I have.' I put my hand into my pocket, but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, 'Will thy Master say, "Well done, good and faithful steward!"? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold. O justice! O mercy! are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid? See thy expensive apparel in the same light—thy gown, hat, head-dress! Everything about thee that cost more than Christian duty required thee to lay out is the blood of the poor! Oh, be wise for the time to come! Be merciful; more faithful to God and man; more abundantly adorned with good works.'"

Time was another matter concerning which Wesley was very conscientious. He tells us that finding he awoke every night about twelve or one o'clock, he came to the conclusion that it arose from his lying longer in bed than he needed. To satisfy himself, he bought an alarum, which awoke him next morning at seven, an hour earlier than he rose the day before. But he lay awake again at night the same. The second morning his alarum awoke him at six, and the third morning at five; but still he lay awake when he ought to have been fast asleep. The fourth morning his alarum awoke him at four, and wakefulness ceased. Sixty years after adopting this plan for finding out how much sleep he required, he wrote: "By the grace of God, I have risen at four o'clock ever since; and, taking the year round, I don't lie awake a quarter of an hour together in a month."

Yet another thing he appears to have been equally conscientious about—the reading of, and acquaintance with, *his Bible*. Writing of this time he says: "In 1729 I began, not only to read, but to study, the Bible; as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of a pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and

clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having 'the mind which was in Christ,' and of 'walking as Christ also walked.' I considered religion as an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more than of bending this rule to the experience of myself, or of other men; or of allowing myself, in any, the least disconformity to our great Exemplar."

What Wesley was thus seeking to attain, the other members of the "society" were also trying to secure. Every morning and evening they spent an hour in private prayer. Three days a week they, at the same hour, prayed for each other. They embraced every opportunity of doing good, and of preventing or removing evil. They spoke directly to men on religious subjects, and before they went out planned what subject would be most useful, and how it could be best introduced. They persuaded all they could to attend public worship, and to obey the laws. They also took the sacrament at Christchurch once a week. They were tenacious of the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England in the minutest points, and were scrupulous in their observance of the rubrics and canons. To use Wesley's own words: "they were in the strongest sense high Churchmen." Wesley felt anxious to know whether he was doing right: so he wrote to his father; and among other things received the following reply: "I have the highest reason to bless God, that He has given me two sons together at Oxford, to whom He has granted grace and courage to turn the war against the world and the devil."

John Wesley had, at the commencement of the year 1730, an offer of a curacy eight miles from Oxford, which he accepted, as it opened to him another sphere of usefulness, and also added slightly to his income. In 1733 he composed and preached two sermons in Oxford on the absolute need of the influence of the Holy Spirit to convert the soul. Early in the same year, while on a journey to see his father, who was ill, he had a narrow escape from death through his horse falling over a bridge not far from Daventry. On the death of his father in 1735 he seems to have been induced to apply for the Epworth living, in which however he was not successful. In the midst of these varied circumstances we find that George Whitefield was introduced to Wesley's notice and became one of the band of Oxford Methodists. Thus Methodism became a fact in Oxford, though by no means free from many things which were far from either scriptural or inviting. But, as Wesley said forty years after, its aims and principles were sincere from

their standpoint. He also adds: "Two young men, without a name, without friends, without either power or fortune, set out from college with principles totally different from those of the common people, to oppose the world, learned, and unlearned; and to combat popular prejudices of every kind. Their first principle directly attacked all the wickedness; the second all the bigotry, in the world. Thus they attempted a reformation, not of opinions (feathers, trifles, not worth naming), but of men's tempers and lives; of vice of every kind; of everything contrary to justice, mercy, and truth. And for this it was that they carried their lives in their hands; and that both the great, vulgar, and small, looked upon them as mad dogs, and treated them as such."

We shall see how correct this was, as we trace the onward career of John Wesley from place to place.

It is not to be supposed that all this was allowed to go on at Oxford without creating opposition. To many of the younger members of the University the conduct of the little band was the subject of constant ridicule, while some of the older and wiser ones considered their course was fast verging on towards extravagance and enthusiasm. At length a meeting was held at Christchurch by the seniors of the college to consult what could be done to check what they called "the evil." This, however, proved to be a complete failure; and notwithstanding the falling away of a few, the company continued steadfast in number and influence.



## CHAPTER VII.

### *The Missionary.*

IN the month of April, 1735, John Wesley's father died; and in the following month the living at Epworth was given away out of the family. Immediately afterwards the few Methodists at Oxford were scattered. Wesley went to London, and became the guest of James Hutton, who kept a boarding school. While there he preached a sermon from the words, "One thing thou lackest," which was the means of converting the son and daughter. While trying to carry out his father's desire of presenting his work on Job<sup>1</sup> to Queen Caroline, Wesley heard that the trustees of the

<sup>1</sup> "DISSERTATIONES IN LIBRUM JOBI": a learned Latin treatise on the Book of Job, by Samuel Wesley.

colony of Georgia were in search of persons who would preach the Gospel there, to the settlers and the Indians, and that they had fixed their eyes upon him and his associates as men who possessed the habits and qualities requisite for such a work. Dr. Burton, meeting Wesley in London, introduced him to General Oglethorpe, the founder of the settlement, who strongly urged Wesley to undertake the mission to the infant colony. At first Wesley did not see his way clear to accept the invitation, and took counsel with his mother, who replied: "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice if they were so well employed." After further consideration he decided upon going, and finally accepted the proposal. Just before he started he happened to meet an unbeliever, who said to him: "What is this, sir? Are you one of the knights-errant? How, pray, got quixotism into your head? You want nothing; you have a good provision for life, and in a way of preferment; and must you leave all to fight windmills—to convert savages in America?" To which he replied calmly and yet earnestly, "Sir, if the Bible be not true, I am as very a fool and madman as you can conceive; but, if it is of God, I am sober-minded: for He has declared, 'There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren . . . for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time; and in the world to come life everlasting'" (Matt. xix. 29; Mark x. 29, 30; Luke xviii. 29, 30).

It had been the intention of his brother Charles to spend all his days in Oxford as a tutor, for he seemed to dread the thought of entering into holy orders: but when he found John had decided to go to Georgia he resolved to accompany him, and was ordained as deacon by Dr. Potter. On October 14th, 1735, both the brothers went on board the *Simmonds* off Gravesend. Two days afterwards Wesley, in order to converse with his German fellow-passengers, began to learn their language; and at the same time, believing that self-denial might be helpful to his piety, he left off the use of flesh and wine, and confined his diet chiefly to rice, biscuits, and vegetables. During the whole of his residence in Georgia, he continued this regimen; but on his return to England he gave it up for a time. Speaking on this he says: "I began to abstain about twelve years ago, when I had no thought of 'annoying parochial ministers,' or of 'captivating any people' thereby; . . . but I resumed the use thereof about two years ago for the sake of some who thought I made it a point of con-



science. Dr. Cheyne advised me to leave it off again, assuring me, 'Till you do, you will never be free from fevers'; and since I have taken his advice, I have been free (blessed be God!) from all bodily disorders."

Although the party for Georgia embarked at Gravesend on October 14th, it was not until December 10th that they fairly started. They met with a heavy storm in the Downs, and had to wait at Cowes for the man-of-war which was to be their convoy. During a perilous storm which overtook the little band, Wesley was much struck with the humble piety and patience with which the Moravians endured the bad treatment to which they had to submit. In the midst of the storm there was an opportunity, he says, of seeing whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the psalm which they were singing, the sea broke over the ship, split the mainsail into pieces, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed them up. While the English were filled with terror and cried out in alarm, the Germans were calmly singing. Wesley asked one of them, "Were you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." "But were not your women and children?" To which he received the following clear reply, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."

There was something in this firm trust in God which Wesley felt he had not yet realized; so he retired to his cabin to lay the lesson to heart himself, in order that he might urge it upon the attention of their "crying, trembling, English neighbours."

On their arrival in Savannah River on February 5th, 1736, after fifty-seven days' voyage, the brothers had to separate. Charles went to lay out the town of Frederica, and John to start at Savannah. It was not long before the subject of Christian confidence, and the inward witness, again pressed upon John's mind; and meeting with Spangenberg, one of the Moravian pastors, while consulting with him respecting the best plan of ministerial labour, he was thus plainly dealt with:—

"My brother," said the Moravian, "I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you 'the witness' within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?"

Wesley felt so surprised that he did not know how to answer these inquiries; and Spangenberg, noticing his embarrassment,

asked another very searching question, "Do you know Jesus Christ?"

"I know He is the Saviour of the world," was Wesley's answer.

"True," rejoined the Moravian; "but do you know that He has saved *you*?"

"I hope He has died to save me," was Wesley's reply.

"Do you yourself *know*?" again asked Spangenberg.

"I do," responded Wesley; "but," he subsequently writes, "I fear they were mere words."

It may perhaps be interesting to know what Wesley's ideas of religion were about this time. In a letter written March 28th, 1737, he says: "I entirely agree with you that religion is love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; that, as it is the happiest, so it is the cheerfulest thing in the world; that it is utterly inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, severity, and indeed with whatever is not according to softness, sweetness, and the gentleness of Christ Jesus. I believe it is equally contrary to all preciseness, stiffness, affectation, and unnecessary singularity. I allow, too, that prudence as well as zeal is of the utmost importance in the Christian life. But I do not yet see any possible case wherein trifling conversation can be an instance of it. . . . That I shall be laughed at for this I know: so was my Master. I am not for a stern, austere manner of conversing. No; let all the cheerfulness of truth be there; all the joyfulness of hope; all the amiable sweetness—the winning easiness—of love."

A fortnight after preaching his first sermon he wrote to his brother Charles: "I have hitherto no opposition at all; all is smooth, and fair, and promising. Many seem to be awakened; all are full of respect and commendation. We cannot see any cloud gathering. But this calm cannot last; storms must come hitherto too; and let them come, when we are ready to meet them." Come they soon did; and he had to encounter much opposition. The fact was he soon learned that the people of the colony would not endure his high Church notions, or the strictness and earnestness with which he enforced the doctrines and practices of what he deemed at that time to be religion. At length the opposition became so general, and all hope of reconciliation appeared to be so hopeless, that Wesley resolved upon returning to England. "I saw clearly," said he, "the hour was come for leaving this place. As soon as evening prayers were over, about eight o'clock, the tide then serving, I shook the dust off my feet, and left Georgia, after having

preached the gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was able) one year and nearly nine months."

In 1737, in order to converse with his Jewish parishioners, Wesley began to learn the Spanish language, and he also appears to have learnt Italian for the same purpose. In this way also he tells us that his "passage is open to the writings of holy men in the German, Italian, and Spanish tongues." Beside all this, notwithstanding his apparent want of success, he had succeeded more than he knew, for when Whitefield arrived, some time after, he wrote, saying: "The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people; and he has laid a foundation that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake. Oh that I may follow him, as he has followed Christ!"



## CHAPTER VIII.

### *The Context.*

On the first day of February, 1738, John Wesley landed at Deal, and learned that Whitefield had only sailed the day before for Georgia. On arriving in London he at once waited upon the Georgian trustees, and gave them a written account of his reasons for returning. The following Sunday he was invited to preach in one of the churches; and from that day, for fifty-three years, continued preaching in and out of season, except during brief periods when sickness hindered him. From his "Journals," while reviewing this period of his history, it appears that he was deeply affected by a lively sense of the many providential interpositions which he had experienced; and however painful, and even detrimental to his worldly prospects, the voyage to Georgia appears to have been, he heartily thanked God for having allowed him to go to that strange land, inasmuch as it gave him a special introduction to the people, in the character of a missionary recently returned from preaching the gospel to the Indians in America. The churches were crowded; but at length his plain and heart-searching sermons proved so arousing that he was forbidden the use of the pulpit with the words, "Sir, you must preach here no more."

Strange to say, though he was at this time so rigid in his conduct in abstaining from everything which the gospel of Christ prohibited, and also at the same time cheerfully practised all which it enjoined;



though he laboured and suffered for the benefit of others, and was diligent in the use of the means of grace both in public and private—yet he declares that his only motive in so doing was a design to please and honour God, and that this continued for many years; and therefore that all that time he was only *almost a Christian*. He believed firmly in a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, and even spoke of any person thus changed as “regenerated, born again, a new creature.” He firmly believed the word of God to be man’s only guide, and judged that the most literal interpretation was the best. He had many remarkable answers to prayer when in trouble. He thoroughly believed that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and that he was accepted of Him, and was His servant; and yet all the time he was seeking to establish his own righteousness, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God, which is by faith. For above ten years there was going on within him this struggle between nature and grace; fighting with sin, but not free from it; never realizing that he was a son of God, nor having the witness of the Spirit that he was accepted in the Beloved.

The crisis was reached when the two Wesleys became acquainted with Peter Böhler, for whom they formed a strong attachment. In his “Journals,” dated February 7th, 1738, John Wesley thus records his earliest interview with one who proved to be his spiritual guide: “A day much to be remembered. At the house of Mr. Wemantz, a Dutch merchant, I met Peter Böhler, Schulius Richter, and Wensel Neiser, just then landed from Germany. Finding they had no acquaintance in England, I offered to procure them a lodging, and did so near Mr. Hutton’s, where I then was. And from this time I did not willingly lose any opportunity of conversing with them while I stayed in London. Friday, February 17th, I set out for Oxford with Peter Böhler. All this time I conversed much with him; but I understood him not; and least of all when he said, “My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.” On the other hand Böhler could not comprehend Wesley, as may be gathered from the following impressions, given in his own words:

“I travelled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man. He knew that he did not properly believe in the Saviour, and was willing to be taught. His brother is at present very much distressed in his mind, but does not know how he shall begin to be acquainted with the Saviour. Our mode of believing in the Saviour

is so easy to Englishmen, that they cannot reconcile themselves to it; if it were a little more artful, they would sooner find their way into it. . . . Of faith in Jesus they have no other idea than men generally entertain. They justify themselves; therefore they always take it for granted that they believe already, and would prove their faith by their works; and thus so plague and torment themselves that they are at heart very miserable."

That these conclusions were just may be clearly seen from the following remarks made by Wesley himself. He says:

"It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. 'I am not mad,' though I thus speak, but 'I speak the words of truth and soberness'; if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am so are they.

"Are they read in philosophy? so was I. In ancient or modern tongues? so was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country; I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God shall please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did, or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in His sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace (which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty)? Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward, moral righteousness, blameless? Or (to come closer yet) the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, Divine character of a Christian? By no means. . . . My own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness are so far from reconciling me to an offended God—so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins which are more in number than the hairs of my head—that the most specious of them

need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment; that having 'the sentence of death' in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely 'through the redemption that is in Jesus.' I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and 'be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, . . . but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. iii. 9)."

During the weeks which intervened between Wesley making Böhler's acquaintance and the departure of the latter for Carolina, several interesting interviews took place. One of these is related by Charles Wesley in connection with a serious illness with which he was taken. On the first Saturday in March, 1738, he says:

"At eleven I waked in extreme pain, which I thought would quickly separate soul and body. Soon after, Peter Böhler came to my bedside. I asked him to pray for me. He seemed unwilling at first; but, beginning very faintly, he raised his voice by degrees, and prayed for my recovery with strange confidence. Then he took me by the hand, and calmly said, 'You will not die now.' I thought within myself: 'I cannot hold out in this pain until morning. If it abates before, I believe I may recover.' He asked me, 'Do you hope to be saved?' 'Yes!' 'For what reason do you hope it?' 'Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God.' He shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart: 'What! are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.'"

This illness had well-nigh proved fatal: but the prayer of Böhler was destined to receive even a more signal answer than was expected. John Wesley at the same time visited his sick brother, and says:

"I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Böhler, by *whom, in the hands of the great God, I was* on Sunday, the 5th, *clearly convinced of unbelief*—of the want of that faith whereby alone we can be saved."

Böhler gives us his account of what was taking place at the time. He says:

"I took a walk with the elder Wesley, and asked him about his spiritual state. He told me that he sometimes felt certain of his salvation, but sometimes he had many doubts; that he could only say this, 'If what stands in the Bible be true, then I am saved.'

Thereupon I spoke with him very fully ; and earnestly besought him to go to the opened Fountain, and not to mar the efficacy of free grace by his unbelief. I also consulted with him about the inquirers at Oxford, and made several proposals having in view their growth in knowledge and grace. Later in the evening Wesley and other students met, and we had a religious conversation."

This visit of Böhler extended over three weeks ; and, as a result, more than a hundred citizens were found under religious awakening. After visiting London for a brief period Böhler returned to Oxford, where he observes :

"The most remarkable feature was a very full conversation which I had with the two Wesleys, in order to impress upon their minds the gospel, and in order to entreat them to proclaim the same to others, as they had opportunity, at Oxford and elsewhere. Thereupon they confessed their doubts respecting the truth of the doctrine of free grace, through the merits of Jesus, whereby poor sinners receive forgiveness, and are set free from the dominion of sin. The Saviour, however, granted me grace to convince them from the Scriptures ; and they had no way of escape, except to *ask to see and converse with persons who had the experiences* of which I spoke. I told them that in London I hoped to be able to show them such Christians."

John Wesley remarks : "I met Peter Böhler again, who amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith,—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by 'the law and the testimony,' and being confident that God would thereby show me whether this doctrine was of God."

A most important stage had now been reached in the experience of both the Wesleys. On May 21st, 1738, Charles Wesley inserts a remarkable passage in his "Journal" :

"I waked in hope and expectation of His coming. At night my brother and some friends came and sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half-an-hour they went. I betook myself to prayer, the substance as follows : 'O Jesus, Thou hast said, I will come unto you. Thou hast said, I will send the Comforter. Thou hast said, My Father and I will come unto you, and make Our abode with you. Thou art God, who canst not lie. I wholly rely upon Thy most true promise. Accomplish it in Thy time and manner.'"

Having thus prayed, he was composing himself to sleep in quietness and peace, when he heard some one say, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and believe; and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities." The words were so appropriate to his state of mind that they struck him to the heart. He said within himself, "Oh that Christ would but speak thus to me!" and lay musing and trembling for some time. Then, ringing the bell for an attendant, he sent to ascertain who had uttered the words, feeling in the meantime "a strange palpitation of heart," and saying, yet fearing to say, "I believe, I believe." A devout woman, who had before given him positive testimony respecting her knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, came to him, and said: "It was I, a weak, sinful creature, that spoke; but the words were Christ's: He commanded me to say them, and so constrained me that I could not forbear." Charles Wesley adds: "I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ."

John meantime had thought that, having no faith, he ought to leave off preaching. But Böhler said: "By no means. Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach it." And so he continued to preach accordingly. Speaking on the subject of faith Wesley writes:

"I met Peter Böhler once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) 'a sure trust and confidence which a man hath, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described as fruits of this living faith. 'The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,' and, 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself,' fully convinced me of the former; as, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,' and, 'Whosoever believeth is born of God,' did of the latter. But I could not comprehend what he spoke of an instantaneous work. I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment; how a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles; but, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions, scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth. I had but one retreat left; namely, 'Thus, I grant,



God wrought in the first ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe He works in the same manner now?' But I was beat out of this retreat too by *the concurring evidence of several living witnesses*, who testified God had thus wrought in themselves, giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could only cry out, 'Lord, help Thou my unbelief!'"

Meantime another step in the great change was about to be taken by John Wesley. It appears that on the Wednesday following the Sunday when Charles Wesley had obtained peace, John says: "I went, very unwillingly, to a 'society' in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's 'Preface to the Epistle to the Romans.' About a quarter to nine," he says, "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my sins*, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death." "Towards ten," observes Charles, "my brother was brought in in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, '*I believe!*' We sang a hymn with great joy. We devoutly say, *To God alone be 'immortal praise!'*"

In this way after "ten years" of earnest prayer, rigorous fasting, and self-sacrificing piety, Wesley was brought into the blissful enjoyment of a conscious salvation, and he entered upon a career of sunshine and joy which completely changed his whole being. True it was still a life of faith; for the same night he tells us "he was much buffeted with temptations, which returned again and again," and the day after "the Enemy injected a fear" that the change was not great enough, and therefore his faith was not real. Three days after his "soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness because of manifold temptations." On the 27th there was a want of joy. On the 31st he "grieved the Spirit of God, not only by not watching unto prayer, but likewise by speaking with sharpness instead of tender love, of one who was not sound in the faith. Immediately God hid His face, and he was troubled and in heaviness till the next morning." But amid all his changes and trials, he held on to his trust in Christ; read his New Testament; and gradually gained power to rejoice in God his Saviour; although from time to time he experienced many fluctuations of feeling, and passed through



several changes in his sentiments, which had come to him through the mists of early education, and the influences by which he had been surrounded from time to time.

Speaking of this kind of conflict in one of his sermons, he says: "The natural man neither fears nor loves God: one under the law, fears; one under grace, loves Him. The first has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness; the second sees the painful sight of hell; the third, the joyous light of heaven. He that sleeps in death hath a false peace. He that is awakened, hath no peace at all. He that believes, has true peace, the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. The heathen, baptized or unbaptized, has a fancied liberty, which is indeed licentiousness; the Jew (or one under the Jewish dispensation) is in heavy, grievous bondage; the Christian enjoys the true, glorious liberty of the sons of God. An unawakened child of the devil sins willingly; one that is awakened, sins unwillingly; a child of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and the Wicked One toucheth him not. To conclude: the natural man neither conquers nor fights; the man under the law fights with sin, but cannot conquer; the man under grace fights and conquers, yea, 'is more than conqueror through Him that loved him.'"



## CHAPTER IX.

### *The Reader.*

THE organization of Methodism has been divided by Mr. Wesley into three separate stages. "The first rise of Methodism," says he, "was in November, 1729, when four of us met together in Oxford; the second was at Savannah, in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty met at my house; the last was at London on this day (May 1st, 1738), when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer." It appears that Wesley had been induced, on his return from Georgia to London, to become a member of the Moravian Society founded in Fetter Lane. The rules of that association, among other things, required that the members should meet once a week; and that they were to be divided into several bands or companies, none consisting of less than five, nor of more than ten persons, one of whom should be called

the "leader." Any person desiring admittance was to be asked what were his motives; whether he would be entirely open, using no kind of reserve; and whether he objected to the rules. Every fourth Saturday was to be observed as a day of general intercession; and on the Sunday seven-night following, a general love-feast was to be held, from seven till ten in the evening. In order to a continual intercession, every member was to choose some hour, either of the day or night, to spend in prayer, chiefly for his brethren; and, in order to a continual fast, three of the members were to fast every day, Sundays and holy days excepted, and spend as much of the day as possible in retirement from business and in prayer. Any person not conforming to the rules was, after being thrice admonished, to be expelled; and each one was to pay to the leader of his band, at least once a month, what he could afford towards the general expenses, etc., etc.

Those associated by these rules and engaged in these meetings obviously constituted a religious society. Yet John Wesley, notwithstanding his union with it, remained a member and minister of the Established Church, and continued to preach in those pulpits where he was allowed.

It was very natural that Wesley should wish to know more about the Moravians, with whom he had been so much brought into contact, and from whom also he had derived so many blessings. We find therefore that he started on a journey in June, 1738, to their chief settlement at Herrnhutt (the Watch of the Lord), in Germany. On his way he called upon Count Zinzendorf, with whom he afterwards had so much to do. On his arrival he sat at the feet of Christian David, the remarkable preacher who had been converted from Romanism and became so well-known as the conductor of the first missionaries to Greenland; and who, though but a poor mechanic, had preached to the court of the king of Denmark. For thirty years David continued an itinerant out-door German preacher, and at the age of sixty went triumphantly to his reward.

After staying among these earnest people until August 12th, Wesley left for London. He arrived in safety on September 16th, and at once resumed his work of preaching. He had, however, not been engaged in this more than four or five weeks before he and his brother Charles were sent for by Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, to answer certain complaints which had been laid against them. After a lengthened interview, during which

many points were raised by the bishop and replied to by the brothers, they were dismissed by his lordship, who gave them the liberty of having free access to him at all times they might desire. They departed, little dreaming that this was the first muttering of a storm which was soon to burst over their heads from many quarters.

In the latter end of the year Whitefield returned from Georgia; and on his arrival in London he at once associated himself with Wesley and his little band. By the close of 1738 most of the pulpits of the Established Church were closed against Wesley. He therefore began, at first with considerable reluctance, to preach in the highways the glad tidings of the gospel. Says Wesley: "When I was told I must preach no more in this, and this, and another church; so much the more those who could not hear me there, flocked together, when I was at any of the Societies; where I spoke more or less, though with much inconvenience, to as many as the room I was in would contain. But after a time, finding these rooms could not contain a tenth part of the people that were earnest to hear, I determined to do the same thing in England which I had often done in a warmer climate; namely, when the house would not contain the congregation, to preach in the open air. This I accordingly did, *first in Bristol*, where the Society-rooms were very small; and at Kingswood where we had no rooms at all: afterwards, in or near London." At Bristol, where he had been invited by Whitefield, many thousands attended his preaching, the result of which was that a Society was formed on the same plan as the one in London. A visible change was soon seen in the lives of hundreds of people; instead of cursing and swearing they were singing praises to God. On Saturday, May 12th, 1739, *the first stone of the first Methodist Chapel* was laid in the city of Bristol.

Such was the nature of the work undertaken by Wesley and his friends. Their chief and only business was to save souls; and in this they were successful. Says Hutton: "Their congregations were composed of every description of persons, who, without the slightest attempt at order, assembled, crying, "Hurrah!" with one breath; and with the next bellowing and bursting into tears on account of their sins; some poking each other's ribs, and others shouting 'Hallelujah!' It was a jumble of extremes of good and evil; and so distracted alike were both preachers and hearers, that it was enough to make one cry to God for His interference. Here thieves, prostitutes, fools, people of every class, several men of distinction, a

few of the learned merchants, and numbers of poor people who had never entered a place of worship, assembled in crowds and became godly."

It was not to be expected that such a work could go on without meeting with opposition. "We continued to call sinners to repentance in London, Bristol, Bath, and a few other places," says Wesley; "but it was not without violent opposition, both from high and low, learned and unlearned. Not only all manner of evil was spoken of us both in private and public, but the hearts of the people were stirred up almost in all places to knock these mad dogs on the head at once. And when complaint was made of their savage, brutal violence, no magistrate would do us justice."

One of the most wicked places at that period was Bath; and the most noted person in it was known as "Beau" Nash. He was at the time Wesley visited it about sixty-five years of age. He had been expelled from college at Oxford for his wild character, and had become a notorious gambler. Nash had been made master of the ceremonies, and reigned as a king amid all the pleasures of that western city. He wore a large white hat, and rode in a post-chaise drawn by six grey horses. He lived by gambling. Nash, when he heard that Wesley meant to preach there, said he should not; but he reckoned without his host. Soon after Wesley had begun his sermon "Beau" appeared in his immense white hat, and asked by whose authority Wesley dared to preach. To which Wesley replied, "By the authority of Jesus Christ conveyed to me by him who is now Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid his hands on me and said, Take thou authority to preach the gospel." "But this is a conventicle," said Nash, "and contrary to act of parliament." "No," answered Wesley; "conventicles are seditious meetings: but here is no sedition; therefore it is not contrary to act of parliament." "I say it is," cried Nash; "and besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits." "Sir," replied Wesley, "did you ever hear me preach?" "No." "How then can you judge of what you never heard?" "I judge," was the answer, "by common report." "Common report," replied Wesley, "is not enough. Give me leave to ask you, sir, is not your name Nash?" "It is," he replied. "Sir," retorted Wesley, "I dare not judge of you by common report." In this way the master of the ceremonies was silenced, and ultimately sneaked away amid the jeers of the people.

Many interesting facts could be given illustrative of the kind of opposition with which Wesley and his friends had to contend.

The following is a sample taken from a parish book in Cornwall: "Item, paid to Mr. So-and-so 7s. 6d. for driving away the Methodists." In the same parish now there are fourteen Wesleyan chapels; and all the population except five families are Methodists.

The following is altogether of a different character, yet it helps to throw some light upon the spirit with which he himself was regarded by men of the world. It is related that one evening five young men met to have a pleasant evening in a tavern. At a loss for amusement, they determined that one of them, a young barrister, and a noted mimic, should "take off Mr. Wesley." Knowing that he was preaching that very night close at hand the young man left his companions for a few minutes for the chapel, that he might be the better able to execute his task, and give them the latest illustration. As he entered the chapel Wesley was giving out his text, "Prepare to meet thy God!" The young barrister listened; and as the preacher proceeded he began to feel a great awe stealing over him: the arrow of God pierced him, and he stood fixed to the spot. At last when Wesley closed, the barrister returned in haste to the tavern. "Well, now," they cried, as he entered, "take him off!" To which he solemnly replied, "Ah! gentlemen, he has taken *me* off!" He then repeated Wesley's melting appeals; and from that night became a sincere Christian, and one of the most noted preachers of the day.

In all directions the Methodists began to be opposed. In sermons, newspapers, pamphlets of all kinds, they were painted as monsters, represented as "mad dogs," and shamefully slandered. One sermon preached before the University of Oxford by the Rev. J. Wilder, M.A., on the "Trial of the Spirits," may be taken as a sample. It brands the party as "deceivers," "babblers," "insolent pretenders," "men of capricious humours," of "spiritual sleight, and cunning craftiness"; "novices in divinity," casting "indecent false, and unchristian reflections on the clergy," "new-fangled teachers, setting up their own fantastic conceits, in opposition to the authority of God; and so bigoted to their wild opinions, and so puffed up with pride and vanity at the success of their enthusiastic labours, that they all appear fully disposed to maintain and defend their cause by more than spiritual weapons, or to die martyrs for it." Other articles equally remarkable for abuse, and scandalousness appeared in which they were denounced as enthusiasts, novelists, *ignes fatui*, glaring meteors, etc., etc.

Not only had Wesley these difficulties and trials to contend with



from without ; but what was worse, during his absence from London, various disputes had arisen among the Society, occasioned by some of the members having imbibed the notion that "the means of grace" were useless, or rather hindrances to the attainment of true religion,—that there are no degrees of faith,—and that pious frauds are justifiable. Finding there was no time to be lost without danger of destroying what he believed to be the cause of God, he resolved to strike at the root of these mistakes. Accordingly every day for a week in succession he exposed these errors ; and finding that the disaffected members still remained unconvinced, he saw that nothing was left but to withdraw from them, which he did in the most solemn manner on Sunday, July 20th, 1740, after reading a paper stating their errors. His final words were as follows : "I have warned you again and again, and besought you to turn back to the 'law and the testimony.' I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But, as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me." About twenty went out of the Fetter Lane meeting with him ; and thus ended his association with the Moravians.

Many testimonies, like the following, might be given of Wesley's courage and presence of mind. Says old Peter Martin : "I remember Wesley well. I first heard him preach in Helston near the market-place, seventy-four years ago. I have also seen him at Redruth ; and had an adventure with him while I was ostler at the London Inn, then kept by Henry Penberthy. Mr. Wesley came there one day in a carriage, driven by his own servant ; who, being unacquainted with the road farther westward than Redruth, obtained my master's leave for me to drive him to St. Ives. We set out, and on our arrival at Hayle, we found the sands between that place and St. Ives, over which we had to pass, overflowed by the rising tide. On reaching the water's edge, I hesitated to proceed, and advised Mr. Wesley of the danger of crossing ; and a captain of a vessel, seeing us stopping, came up, and endeavoured to dissuade us from an undertaking so full of peril ; but without effect. Mr. Wesley was resolved to go on ; he said he had to preach at St. Ives at a certain hour, and that he must fulfil his appointment ; and looking out at the carriage window he called loudly to me, "Take the sea ! take the sea !" In a moment I dashed into the waves and was quickly involved in a world of waters. The horses were now swimming, and the carriage became nearly overwhelmed with the tide, as its



hinder wheels not unfrequently merged into the deep pits and hollows in the sands. I struggled hard to maintain my seat in the saddle, while the poor, affrighted animals were snorting and rearing in the most terrific manner, and furiously plunging through the opposing waves. I expected every moment to be swept into eternity; and the only hope of escape I then cherished was on account of my driving so holy a man. At this awful crisis I heard Mr. Wesley's voice. With difficulty I turned my head towards the carriage, and saw his long white locks dripping with the salt sea down the rugged furrows of his venerable countenance. He was looking calmly forth from the windows, undisturbed by the tumultuous war of the surrounding waters, or by the danger of his perilous position. He hailed me with a tolerably loud voice and asked, 'What is thy name, driver?' I answered, 'Peter.' 'Peter!' said Mr. Wesley; 'Peter, fear not; thou shalt not sink!' With vigorous spurring and whipping I again urged on the flagging horses, and at last got safely over; but it was a miracle, as I shall always say. We continued our journey, and reached St. Ives without further hindrance. We were both very wet, of course. Mr. Wesley's first care after our arrival was to see me comfortably lodged at the tavern: he procured me warm clothes, a good fire, and excellent refreshments. Neither were the horses forgotten by him. Totally unmindful of himself, he proceeded, wet as he was, to the chapel, and preached according to his appointment." It is worthy of note that of this and many other remarkable deliverances Mr. Wesley makes no mention in his "Journal."



## CHAPTER X.

### *The Seceder.*

ON the day following this secession, Wesley, with about twenty-five men and fifty women, met for the first time at the Foundry in Moorfields, a place which was to become the centre of much religious influence in many ways. It was here, on the 23rd of July, 1740, that the Methodist Society was founded. Wesley preached regularly at this place, and the Society rapidly increased; but this success brought along with it many troubles, and among others those which resulted from the difference of opinion between Whitefield and Wesley on the Calvinistic theory of the Atonement. During his residence in college Wesley had thoroughly examined

the subject for himself, and in letters to his mother had in the strongest terms expressed the conclusions at which he had arrived. Both his parents also held the doctrines of election and reprobation in abhorrence. It was therefore no wonder that when Whitefield, with the frankness peculiar to his nature, wrote to Wesley while in America an account of his own opinions, that it aroused the antagonism of the latter; for, as Southey truthfully remarks of Wesley at this period, he was "of a pugnacious spirit, the effect of his sincerity, his ardour, and his confidence." A controversy by letter between them was the result, which produced one of the greatest events in the history of Wesley, and also led to the organization of "Lady Huntingdon's Connexion," and the formation in Wales of the body known as "Calvinistic Methodists." Wesley, writing of this in March, 1741, says: "Mr. Whitefield, being returned to England, entirely separated from Mr. Wesley and his friends, because he did not hold the decrees. Here was the first breach, which warm men persuaded Mr. Whitefield to make merely for a difference of opinion. Those who believed in universal redemption had no desire to separate; but those who held particular redemption would not hear of any accommodation, being determined to have no fellowship with men that were 'in such dangerous errors.' So there were two sorts of Methodists: those for particular, and those for general redemption."

Although this diversity of sentiment led to such a separation, it must also be stated that the controversy was conducted with good temper on both sides; and even when the two leaders parted they retained towards each other the kindest feelings and warmest regard, each endeavouring to effect as much good as possible in his own way. This friendly spirit suffered no interruption until Whitefield's death; when Wesley, in preaching his funeral sermon, bore ample testimony to the piety, zeal, and extensive usefulness, of his much loved and honoured friend.

Notwithstanding these trials and difficulties, Wesley bravely pursued his own way and met with considerable success. While forty or fifty persons were praying and giving thanks at the Foundry in August, two persons began to cry to God with a loud and bitter cry, and soon found peace. Five days after, a woman at Long Lane meeting fell down and continued in violent agonies for an hour. In September, several men forced their way into the Foundry, and began to speak big, swelling words; but, "immediately after, the hammer of the word brake the rock in pieces,"

A smuggler rushed in cursing, but when Wesley had finished preaching, the man declared before all the people, that henceforth he would abandon smuggling, and give his heart to God.

Over and over again Wesley was assailed by what is generally termed the "mob." In town after town, city after city, his appearance was the signal for the roughs and the rabble to collect together in abundance; but under the mighty influence of his preaching "they melted away like water, and were as men that had no strength." As he descended from the coach at the door of the Foundry the rabble met him in throngs for the purpose of preventing his entrance: but this did not deter him from seeking to do them good; and as he took his stand in the street and preached to them of "righteousness, and judgment to come," they became quiet and attentive, and departed from him with many blessings. "Many more," he says, "who came to the Foundry as lions, in a short time became as lambs, the tears trickling apace down the cheeks of those who at first most loudly contradicted and blasphemed." Some days later a riotous multitude entered the building, and attempted to drown his voice by their outcries. But soon "the hammer of the word brake the rocks in pieces; and all quietly heard the glad tidings of salvation." On the following Sunday, when he came home, he found an innumerable mob around the door, who raised a simultaneous shout the moment they saw him. He sent his friends into the house, and then walked into the midst of the crowd, proclaiming "the name of the Lord, gracious and merciful, and repenting Him of the evil." They stood staring one at another, not knowing what to make of him. "I told them," he says, "they could not flee from the face of the great God, and therefore besought them that we might all join together in crying to Him for mercy." And such was the irresistible character of his appeal that they readily agreed to his proposal, and he prayed amid the awe-struck multitude, and afterwards went to the little company inside his house undisturbed as well as unhurt.

As the people who thus gathered together increased in numbers, the question arose—What was to be done in the way of visiting them, and preaching to them? At first Wesley hoped that the ministers of the Church of England would take part in the work; but in this he was disappointed, and he had no alternative but to try other methods. This led ultimately to the appointment of lay-preachers, and in this way helped to the spread of Methodism in all directions. Chapels had to be built; Societies formed and

disciplined; funds raised; rules enacted; and a regular system of itinerancy among the ministers established. It was not surprising that all this organized attack on the kingdom of Satan was not allowed to go on unrecognized or unopposed: hence in London, Bristol, Falmouth, Sheffield, Staffordshire, and many other parts of the kingdom, persecution of the most bitter character began to prevail; and some of the preachers, Wesley himself included, found their lives frequently in danger.

In passing we may allude to the observance of the first watch-night service, which took place at Bristol in 1740. It was held at the suggestion of James Rogers, one of the Kingswood colliers. This man had been noted among his neighbours for playing on the violin: but, being converted under the ministry of Charles Wesley, he went home, burnt his fiddle, and told his wife he meant to be a Methodist; and a Methodist he continued until the day of his death. This watch-night service began at half-past eight; the house was filled from end to end; and, says Wesley, "we concluded the year, wrestling with God in prayer, and praising Him for the wonderful work which He had already wrought upon the earth."

Having seceded from the Moravians and separated from Whitefield, there was no alternative for Wesley but to do all he could to organize and purge the Societies, which were now purely his own. So we find him at Bristol taking an account of every person (1) to whom any reasonable objection was made; and (2), who was not known to, and recommended by, some on whose veracity he could depend. To those who were sufficiently recommended *he gave tickets*. By this process about seventy were excluded. He also appointed stewards to receive and expend what was contributed weekly. In London he did the same; and as a result, the Society was reduced to about a thousand members. He appointed visitors to look after the sick and the poor, and to pay pastoral visits. It was in this way that the Methodist Societies as organized by Wesley were fairly started in 1741.

While on a visit in Wales Wesley was seized with a serious illness; and on arriving at Bristol Dr. Middleton ordered him to bed. This was a new experience: he says, it was "a strange thing to me, who have not kept my bed a day for five-and-thirty years." A dangerous fever followed. For eight days he hung between life and death; and for three weeks was kept a prisoner: immediately after which, contrary to the advice given him, he started to work again, and began to preach every day. It may be easily imagined

that this enforced retirement was not quite congenial to a man of Wesley's habits; so we find him spending the interval, as far as he was able, in reading such books as "The Life of that truly good and great man, Mr. Philip Henry," "The Life of Matthew Henry," and others.

With returning health Wesley began to enlarge his sphere of labour; and, as a consequence, he discovered that he and his brother were not equal to the demands it made upon them. Hence it became necessary to add to the staff of preachers. Among those who became chiefly known in these early days was John Nelson, the record of whose life and labours is full of startling incidents. Another remarkable man—Thomas Maxfield—to whom reference has already been made on page 23, may also be named. Wesley explains his action in using these able men by saying: "No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation." The result was that before long he could honestly say, "In several places by means of these unlettered men, not only those who had already begun to run well were hindered from drawing back to perdition; but other sinners also, from time to time, were converted from the error of their ways." And he adds, by way of vindicating his course of action: "This plain account of the whole proceeding I take to be the best defence of it. I know no Scripture which forbids making use of such help in a case of such necessity. And I praise God who has given even this help to these poor sheep, when their own shepherds pitied them not." These were bold words at that time; but subsequent events have proved how wise and true they were: so much is this the case that the same Church which branded him for permitting lay-preaching then, is now actually adopting the same thing herself.

During the year 1742 Wesley commenced in real earnest his work of itinerancy. He spent about twenty-four weeks in London and the locality; in Bristol and the neighbourhood, fourteen weeks. He made two tours to Newcastle-on-Tyne, occupying thirteen weeks; taking on his way Bristol, Birstal, Halifax, Dewsbury, Epworth, Sheffield, and other places adjacent to each of these towns.

It was during this journey into the north that Wesley called at Epworth, and offered the curate-in-charge to assist him either by



preaching or reading the prayers ; but his offer was declined, and a sermon was preached by the curate against Wesley and his movement. The result was that as the people came out of church they were told that as Mr. Wesley was not allowed to preach in the church, he would do so in the churchyard at six o'clock. At that hour Wesley stood on his father's tombstone and preached to the largest congregation ever gathered in Epworth. Speaking of this event, Wesley says : " I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb, than I did by preaching three years in the pulpit." Nor was this to be wondered at, for his preaching was attended with mighty power. The people on every side wept aloud ; several dropped as if dead ; and his voice was frequently drowned by the cries of the penitents, while many in the old churchyard then and there found peace. Thus, in spite of the curate, the churchyard became the scene of some of Wesley's greatest triumphs.

One incident may be given of the kind of work in which he had to engage. At Easter he and Whitefield had a service on Moorfields, which at that time was the *rendezvous* of mountebanks, players, drummers, trumpeters, merry-andrews, and menageries. Whitefield mounted his field-pulpit, and from twenty to thirty thousand people flocked around him. He was pelted with dirt, dead cats, rotten eggs, and stones. A buffoon from one of the shows tried to lash him with a whip. For three hours Whitefield continued praying, preaching, and singing ; and then retired to the Tabernacle with his pocket full of notes from persons who had been awakened by his sermon, and which he read amid the joyous acclamations of the people. A thousand such papers had been sent him ; and three hundred and fifty penitents were received into church fellowship in one day. Such were the glorious results which followed the faithful and earnest preaching with which this man of God appealed to the masses outside a Church which professed and claimed to number them at the time among its children.



## XI.

### The Preacher.

WHILE it is quite true all are not called upon to preach the gospel from the pulpit, it is equally certain that sometimes great results have followed from a word spoken in due season. Such was the



case with Wesley, as he tells us towards the end of his laborious and successful life. On the last Sunday in the year 1788, when he was eighty-five years of age, he had to preach in All-Hallows Church, Lombard Street, for the benefit of forty-eight poor children belonging to St. Ethelburga Society. There was an immense congregation gathered to hear him. While putting on his gown Wesley said to his attendant: "Sir, it is above fifty years since I first preached in this church; I remember it from a particular circumstance. I came without a sermon; and, going up the pulpit stairs, I hesitated and returned into the vestry, under much mental confusion and agitation. A woman who stood by noticed my concern, and said, 'Pray, sir, what is the matter?' I replied, 'I have not brought a sermon with me.' Putting her hand on my shoulder, she said: "Is that all? Cannot you trust God for a sermon?" This question had such an effect upon me, that I ascended the pulpit, preached extempore with great freedom to myself and acceptance to the people, and have never since taken a written sermon into the pulpit."

Although he never preached from his manuscript, it is evident from what he says, as well as from the sermons he also published, that he bestowed great care in the preparation of his discourses. He was not the kind of man to expect God to help him, unless he had done everything he could to help himself. Over and over again we find him also advising his preachers to "be diligent, never to be unemployed a moment." To "spend all the morning, or at least five hours out of the twenty-four, in reading *the most useful* books, and that regularly and constantly. 'But I read only the Bible.' Then you ought to teach others to read only the Bible; and by parity of reason, to *hear only* the Bible. But if so, you need preach no more. Just so said George Bell; and what is the fruit? Why, now he neither reads the Bible nor anything else. This is rank enthusiasm. If you need no book but the Bible, you are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too. 'But I have *no taste* for reading.' Contract a taste for it by use; or return to your trade." And in this way he rebuts all attempts at shirking this manifest duty of a preacher being a well-read man.

One of the secrets of Wesley's success in preaching was his adoption of a plain style and homely illustrations; and for this he gives the following sensible reasons: "Having preached one of my most polished sermons in a country church, and noticing that the people gaped and stared so much, I concluded they did not

understand it. I then put out all the words I thought not in common use, and in preaching the sermon again I noticed they heard it with their mouths half-open. I then said, 'It will not do yet.' In the house where I lodged there was an intelligent servant-maid, and at a leisure hour I called her in and said: 'Betty, I have preached a sermon, and have some doubts whether the people understood me; I will read it slowly, and you will stop me at every word you do not understand, and I will change it for a word that you know; and if you understand the sermon the people will understand it.' So I proceeded, writing a plain word over every hard word. At length 'Stop, sir; stop, sir!' came so often that I grew impatient; and I said, 'I am surprised at you, Betty; I am sure everybody will understand that word.' To which she replied, 'I do not know, sir, what it means.' Suffice it to say, that I read the sermon through, and on preaching it a third time the people heard it with their mouths shut."

In one of his journeys Wesley had as a fellow-passenger in a coach an officer whose conversation was both intelligent and agreeable, except for one serious drawback—his profanity. At length while they were changing vehicles Wesley took the officer aside, and after expressing the pleasure he had enjoyed from his company, said he had a great favour to ask him. The young officer at once replied, "I will take great pleasure in obliging you; for I am sure you will not make an unreasonable request." "Then," replied Wesley, "as we have to travel together some distance, I beg that, if I should so far forget myself as to swear, you will kindly reprove me." The officer at once saw the motive, and felt the force of the request, and, smiling, said, "None but Mr. Wesley could have conceived a reproof in such a manner." It may be added also that the reproof acted like a charm for the rest of the journey.

Southey, who was by no means an ardent admirer of Wesley, is obliged to confess that the following extract from a sermon on "Reprobation" by Mr. Wesley, is one of the finest examples of impassioned eloquence in the English language:

"This doctrine represents our blessed Lord Jesus Christ—the righteous, the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth—as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity; for it cannot be denied that He everywhere speaks as if He were *willing* that all men should be saved. You represent Him as mocking His helpless creatures, by offering what He never intends to give. You describe Him as saying one thing

and meaning another; as pretending the love which He has not. Him in whose mouth was no guile, you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity. When nigh the city, He wept over it, and said, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together; and ye would not!’ Now, if you say *they* would, but *He* would not, you represent Him—which, who could hear?—as weeping crocodile’s tears, weeping over the prey which Himself had doomed to destruction. Oh, how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, ‘To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish!’ ”

Such language as this moved the masses in the church and in the field, and produced even among his opponents the conviction that there was something unusual in the man.

Among other tributes to his character as a preacher, the following appears to be one of the most comprehensive:

“Priest, these graces did possess;  
Of an ambassador the just address,  
A father’s tenderness, a shepherd’s care,  
A tender courage, which the cross can bear,  
A ruler’s awe, a watchman’s wakeful eye,  
A pilot skilled the helm in storms to ply,  
A fisher’s patience, and a labourer’s toil,  
A guide’s dexterity to disemboil,  
A prophet’s inspiration from above,  
A teacher’s knowledge, and a Saviour’s love.”

While preaching at Doncaster in the summer of 1790, Wesley related the following striking fact: “A poor woman of the Roman Catholic persuasion, having had the misfortune to break her china crucifix, immediately went to her priest to inform him, mourning greatly on account of the sad circumstance, and frequently crying out, ‘Now I have broken my crucifix, I have nothing to trust in—but the great God.’” When Wesley repeated these words he appeared to feel strongly, and in a manner peculiar to himself exclaimed, “What a mercy she had the great God to trust in!” A respectable Roman Catholic who occasionally visited the chapel was present, and was powerfully affected. “The great God to trust in,” touched his heart. He was deeply convinced of his need of salvation, joined the Methodist Society, became an ornament to religion, and to the day of his death continued in the Wesleyan fellowship.

Among the marvellous results which attended the preaching of John Wesley may be mentioned the case of Silas Told. While he was attending one of Wesley's five o'clock morning sermons the text, "I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not," struck the heart and conscience of this generous mariner. He sank even into despondency for several days, under the impression that he had neglected the sufferers of Newgate; and he resolved thenceforth to do his duty toward them: but he knew not the measures requisite to be pursued for his good purpose. A devout Methodist woman who visited the prisons, soon reported to him that ten men, in one of them, were about to die. He found them out, got them together in one cell, and preached to them repentance and hope, declaring that "the King of heaven had laid down His life for the chief of sinners"; that "He certainly died for them"; and quoting the examples of the repentance and salvation of David, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the thief on the cross. Eight of these criminals were hung at once, Told riding with them in the cart, and praying for them under the gallows. His faithful ministrations had led them all to repentance, and they died in contrite hope of the mercy of God.

Having thus begun his new career of usefulness, he never slackened in it till he was called to his reward in heaven. For more than thirty years no man was better known or more welcome in all the prisons of the metropolis and the neighbouring towns, than Silas Told. All sorts of criminals, Papists and Protestants, educated men, officers of the army and navy, as well as the poor who had no other friend, not only respected him, but clung to him in their anguish for consolation and counsel. He seemed to have had, by his deep piety and sailor-like generosity and simplicity, a peculiar power over the rudest minds. Notwithstanding no little opposition at first, not only from prisoners, but also from gaolers and ordinaries or chaplains, he persisted till he won his way; for "through all this," he writes, "I burst the more vehemently, so that I became in the name of God resolute in that point, and would take no denial." Silas Told continued in this good work until his strength failed; and when, at nearly seventy years of age he died, it is no wonder we find Wesley writing of him as follows: "1778, Sunday, December 30th, I buried what was mortal of honest Silas Told. For many years he attended the malefactors in Newgate, without fee or reward; and I suppose no man for this hundred years has been so successful in that melancholy office. God had given him peculiar talents for it; and he had amazing success

therein. The greatest part of those whom he had attended died in peace, and many of them in the triumph of faith." It is said that turnkeys, sheriffs, and even hangmen wept as they listened to his exhortations and prayers; and the prison officials sent for him when any new cases occurred, which his tireless zeal had not discovered. They opened passages to the gallows for him through the clamorous and ribald crowds.

What Wesley endeavoured to do himself, he also required those who were associated with him as preachers to imitate. His two main injunctions to his preachers clearly set this forth, where he tells them to:—

1. "Preach holiness clearly, strongly, explicitly; and lead the members to seek and obtain it."

2. "Labour to advance the work of Christian perfection. When this is not preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God, and consequently little addition to the Society, or little life in the members of it. Speak, and spare not. Let not regard to any man induce you to betray the truth of God. Till you press believers to expect full salvation *now*, you must not look for any revival. Let us not, as genuine Methodists, be 'afraid of the light.' But in the spirit of our Divine Master let us confer together to expect and remove hindrances to revivals, and to promote His glory in the salvation of those for whom He 'was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'"

Again, we find him frankly confessing: "I many times doubt whether we preachers are not, in some measure, partakers of their sins, when we keep persons in Society at the time they prefer the fashions of the world to the commandments of God."

Writing to a friend in 1751, Wesley gives his own views as to what should be the main points kept in view by the preacher: he says:—

"I think the right method of preaching is this. At our first beginning to preach in any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners, and His willingness that they should be saved, to preach the 'law' in the strongest, closest, the most searching manner possible. After persons are convinced of sin, we may mix more and more of the gospel in order to beget faith, to raise into spiritual life those whom the 'law' hath slain. I would not advise to preach the law without the gospel any more than the gospel without



the law. Undoubtedly both should be preached in their turns; yea, both at once, or both in one. All the conditional promises are instances of this. They are 'law' and 'gospel' mixed together."

He then relates how that, in consequence of this plan having been adopted by himself, his brother, and the early preachers at the beginning, "it pleased God to work those mighty effects in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Yorkshire, and Newcastle," and concludes by saying, "So *we* preached, and so *you* believed. This is the Scriptural way; the Methodist way; the true way. God grant we may never turn therefrom, to the right hand or to the left."

Wesley, in addition to his piety, had a wonderful fund of humour, which enabled him at times to convey reproof in such a manner that it could not be resented. Speaking of Michael Fenwick, he says: "He was often hindered from settling in business because God had other work for him to do. He is just made to travel with me, being an excellent groom, valet-de-chambre, nurse, and, upon occasion, a tolerable preacher." Michael, however, one day was vain enough to complain to Wesley that, though constantly travelling with him, his own name was never inserted in Wesley's published journals. In the next number of the "Journal," he found however that his egotism was effectually rebuked by Wesley in the following entry: "I left Epworth with great satisfaction, and, about one, preached at Clayworth. I think none were unmoved but Michael Fenwick, who fell fast asleep under an adjoining hay-rick." This, it might be hoped, was a sufficient acknowledgment of his presence.

While writing to Joseph Cownley, he took the opportunity to give his opinion upon preaching, and to warn of a danger. Wesley says: "I see a danger you are in, which perhaps you do not see yourself. Is it not most pleasing to me, as well as to you, to be always preaching of the love of God? Without doubt so it is. But yet it would be utterly wrong and unscriptural to preach of nothing else. Let the 'law' always prepare for the gospel. I scarce ever spoke more earnestly here of the love of God in Christ, than I did last night; but it was after I had been tearing the unawakened in pieces. Go thou, and do likewise. It is true the love of God in Christ alone feeds His children; but even they are to be guided as well as fed, yea, and often physicked too; and the bulk of our hearers must be purged before they are fed, else we only feed the disease. Beware of 'all honey.' It is the best extreme; but it is an extreme."

If such stirring words were needful then, how much more so are they required in these days; when we are hearing so much in all

directions of the Fatherhood of God, to the neglect of His rightful claims as King and Lord of all!

Not long before his death Wesley had to preach in Raithby Church, in Lincolnshire. The place was crowded to excess, so much so that a child had, in order to see and hear him, placed itself on the pulpit stairs. Wesley stopped on his way to the pulpit, and affectionately kissed the little intruder. Thus spontaneously showing that love, not ambition, was the ruling passion which animated him, even when surrounded with everything calculated to make him forget himself.

Once when on a visit at Mr. Edwards' school at Lambeth Marsh, as was his practice whenever he went there, he inquired for the children whom he knew, or of whose parents he had some knowledge; and when he was about to leave, he used to talk to them individually and pray with them. Speaking of this Mrs. D'Orme says: "On these occasions we were all up at four o'clock in the morning; and I well remember it was considered a great treat to me and others. He always kept a little comb in his pocket, and used to take me between his knees and separate my hair in the front, after the manner he wore his own, and patted me gently on the head, saying he hoped I was a good girl, and that I prayed to God; for if I was not a good girl I must have a pat on the head, but he would not wish it to be very hard. I well remember that I thought I should like him for a schoolmaster, if I was to be dealt with so kindly."

After preaching at Lincoln from the words, "One thing is needful," as the congregation was retiring from the chapel, a lady was heard to exclaim, "Is this the great Mr. Wesley, of whom we hear so much in the present day? Why, the poorest might have understood him." The gentleman to whom the remark was made replied, "In this, madam, he displays his greatness; that, while the poorest can understand him, the most learned are edified, and cannot be offended."



## CHAPTER XII.

### *The Outdoor Preacher.*

THE life of Wesley is full of facts which clearly illustrate how much he had to unlearn. When he first heard Whitefield preaching in the open air to the colliers at Kingswood, he stood amazed: and he tells

us that he could not for a time reconcile himself to such a strange mode of preaching, inasmuch as he had all his life (until very late), been so very tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that he would have thought "the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church," though he acknowledges that when in Georgia he did preach in the open-air when the house was too small, and they had no church. But in the evening of the same day, while expounding our Lord's sermon on the mount, to a little society, he was struck by it as one pretty remarkable precedent for field-preaching; "though I suppose," he adds, "there were churches at that time." But on the following day all doubt vanished as he writes: "Monday, April 2: At four in the afternoon I submitted to the inevitable, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people."

From that day the spell was broken; and forward he must go: inasmuch as he was now independent of the clergyman, whether he would let him have the use of the church or not. The words from which he spoke were equally suitable to the occasion. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Necessity, we are told, knows no law. And in this matter Wesley no doubt felt the saying to be true; for he had not been able to preach more than a dozen sermons in three months owing to the refusal of the clergy to lend him their pulpits. Hence it is evident, that had he not adopted this course his preaching career would soon have come to an end.

The real starting point of Wesley's evangelistic work seems to have been in 1739. It was also in the same year that lay-preaching began, and who shall ever be able to tell the story of the marvellous results which have followed these two steps? Wesley commenced with two prime conditions of success—(1) His own clearer experience of the truths of the Gospel; and (2) His decision to preach in the open-air whenever he was refused a church, and could secure a congregation.

Without doubt this commencement of open-air preaching was the most important step in Wesley's life, so far as his influence over the masses of the people was concerned. It gave him at once access to them in such a manner as he never would have secured in any

place of worship. Thousands who never entered such places, and who therefore all the more needed the gospel, heard it from his lips, and were saved. It is therefore not surprising to find him recording that he quickly followed up his new-found freedom, and that on the following Sunday he preached at seven o'clock in the morning to about a thousand people in Bristol, and afterwards to about one thousand five hundred in Kingswood; and in the afternoon at Rose Green to about five thousand. On the Tuesday, by desire, he preached at Bath to about a thousand, and again to about twice that number; and then to about as many at Baptist Mills. On the Saturday we find him at the poor-house with three or four hundred within, and more than twice as many without. On the following Sunday five or six thousand met at seven to hear him on "the Pharisee and the Publican." A little later, at Hanham Mount, three thousand listened to him. At Rose Green in the evening, from five to six thousand also gathered to hear him.

He is invited to Pensford, and asks for the use of the church; but, receiving no answer, he preached to the people who were gathered in an open place, and then returned to Bristol, where he addressed three thousand in the afternoon. On the following Sunday his first congregation consisted of about four thousand persons. After preaching at Clifton for the minister who was ill, he addressed three thousand persons at Hanham Mount; thence he went to Rose Green, where it is computed near seven thousand assembled. And thus the record might be continued, until we hear him say, "Oh, how has God renewed my strength, who used to be so faint and weary with preaching twice in one day!"

Such extraordinary gatherings, marked as they were also by such marvellous results, not only aroused thoughts and feelings among his enemies and opponents, but of necessity led him to ask himself whether he was altogether right in his present course. He always liked to give "a logical reason" for his action, and therefore we find him giving very close consideration to the whole matter. At length he gave utterance to the following, among other reasons, for his conduct: "If you ask on what principle I then acted, it was this: a desire to be a Christian, and a conviction that whatever I judge conducive thereto, that I am bound to do; wherever I judge I can best answer this end, thither it is my duty to go. On this principle I set out for America; on this, I visited the Moravian Church; and on the same am I ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia or China, or whithersoever it shall please God, by

this conviction, to call me. You ask, 'How is it that I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing psalms and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded?' and think it hard to justify doing this in other men's parishes, upon catholic principles.

"Permit me to speak plainly. If by 'catholic principles' you mean any other than Scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures; but on Scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God, in Scripture, commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish—that is, in effect, to do it at all; seeing I have now, no parish of my own. If it be just to obey God rather than man, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Again: "Suffer me to tell you my principles in this matter. *I look upon all the world as my parish*; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain direction of His word; as I have opportunity, doing good unto all men! And His providence clearly concurs with His word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might myself attend on this very thing, and go about doing good."

It will thus be seen that so far as his own convictions were concerned, he felt perfectly justified in doing what he did, whether it was in conformity with Church custom or law; although to a rigid Churchman such as he had wished to be considered, it is singular his practice did not appear to be a complete violation of Church order. The end however in this case justified the means: so at length he met his objectors with the following statements, which it is very clear were not easily to be gainsaid. "Be pleased to observe—first, that I was forbidden, as by general consent, to preach in any church (though not by any judicial sentence), *for preaching such doctrine*. This was the open, avowed cause; there was at that time no other, either real or pretended (except that the people crowded so). Secondly, that I had no desire or design to preach in the open-air till after this prohibition. Thirdly, that when I did,



as it was no matter of choice, so neither of premeditation. There was no scheme at all previously formed which was to be supported thereby; nor had I any other end in view than this—to save as many souls as I could. Fourthly, *field preaching* was, therefore, a sudden expedient—a thing submitted to rather than chosen; and therefore submitted to because I thought preaching even thus, *better than not preaching at all*; first, in regard to my own soul, because a dispensation of the gospel being committed to me, I did not dare not to preach the gospel; secondly, in regard to the souls of others, whom I everywhere saw *seeking death in the error of their life.*”

With such firm convictions, it was no wonder that he continued to avail himself of every opportunity of preaching the gospel in the open-air; so we find that from this time forward he became an out-door preacher. During 1739 and subsequent years it is recorded of him that he preached on Blackheath to twelve or fourteen thousand people, and on Kennington Common to twenty thousand; in Gloucester to seven thousand; in Bath and Bradford to near ten thousand; and in other places to immense multitudes. At an early service at Gloucester, on a Sunday morning, he preached to some two or three thousand persons. At eleven o'clock at Runwick, seven miles away, he spoke in a crowded church, upwards of a thousand remaining in the churchyard; he preached again in the afternoon, the crowd being larger by some thousands. Again, between five and six o'clock, three thousand listened to him on Stanley Green, where he continued preaching for nearly two hours, the darkness and some lightning not lessening the numbers, but increasing the seriousness, of the hearers. Next day he preached to a company of five thousand at Hampton Common. He then goes into Wales, and the church at Abergavenny being refused him he spoke in the open-air to a thousand people, though the frost was sharp, it being after sunset. He then proceeded to Usk, Pontypool, Cardiff, Newport, and then from one end of England to the other. Then again through the Principality of Wales; and then across the borders to Scotland: and not content with this, to the north and south of Ireland; thus showing the breadth of his sympathies, the universal character of his labours, and his readiness to spend and be spent while carrying the good tidings of the gospel to those who most needed its precious blessings.

It must be remembered that Wesley had to perform these journeys before the days of railways, and that oft-times in the winter his speed was of necessity slow, in consequence of the state of the

roads, snow, etc. In some cases, he tells us that a thaw succeeded by a frost made the ground like glass; and often he was obliged to walk, it being impossible to ride, his horse frequently falling even while leading it. On one journey, Gateshead Fell appeared like a great, pathless, white waste. How to reach Newcastle he knew not; nor could he have done so, had it not been for an honest man acting as guide. He says: "Many a rough journey have I had before; but one like this I never had—between wind, and hail, and rain, and ice, and snow, and driving sleet, and piercing cold. But it is past. These days will return no more, and are therefore as though they had never been." This was calm language for one who had made a rough journey of two hundred and eighty miles on horseback in six days, or about fifty miles a day; and it speaks volumes as to the persevering spirit of the man, amid all his other difficulties and dangers. On another journey, from Kendal to Portpatrick, he had to struggle against wind, snow, and sleet, through wretched roads, and, at one point, had to pass Solway Firth through water reaching to his horse's belly.

We find him on February 16th, 1747, starting on his journey from London to Newcastle, when a north wind blew so hard and keen that when he got to Hatfield he could scarcely use his hands or feet; and farther on he encountered such a storm of snow and hail that it made sight useless and breathing almost impossible. Next day he could scarcely keep his horse on his feet. The wind rose higher and higher, until it threatened to overthrow him and his horse. A storm of rain and hail after this drove through his great-coat, undercoat, boots, and everything, while his eyebrows were hung with icicles. On Stamford Heath the snow lay in mountain drifts, and sometimes nearly covered the rider and horse together. A day later he says that snow had fallen so deep that his servant told him it was impossible to proceed. To which Wesley replied, "At least we can walk twenty miles a day with our horses in our hands." So off they started. The north-east wind was piercing; Wesley was distracted with toothache: but at five in the afternoon they reached Newark; and so onwards.

Setting out again from London on Sunday, March 15th, 1752, on his long journey through the north, which with his tour in Ireland took seven months, we find that all the way to Manchester he encountered a series of storms of wind and snow; but this did not prevent him from preaching in the open air when he had opportunity.

Sir Edward Clive, after hearing Wesley preach an assize sermon

at Bedford, sent him an invitation to dine with him; but having to be at Epworth, which was one hundred and twenty miles away, the night following, he sent an excuse, and at once set out, amid a piercing storm of wind, snow, sleet, and hail; and by almost continuous travelling, part of the time on a lame horse, and part of the time in a post-chaise, he reached Epworth at ten on Saturday night, having on that day travelled over bad roads ninety miles in seventeen hours; and, as he tell us, “he was as fresh at the end of his journey as he was at the beginning,” though a man of fifty-five years old. The next afternoon, in the midst of wintry rain and mud, he preached to an unflinching multitude; and the day following set out for York. In making his way from Stockport to Leeds, in 1760, his horse was “embogged” on the top of a high mountain; he was thrown into the morass; and then had a walk which for “steepness, and bogs, and big stones intermixed” was such as he had never before encountered.

The winds, the storms, and the roads, however, were by no means his greatest difficulties. He found greater obstacles in the stormy passions, the ungodly spirits, and the rabid insolence with which he had to contend, as he passed from town to town, and from city to city.

The most strange, startling, and sometimes romantic incidents accompanied Wesley in these out-door services. At Syke House some of his friends met him and said that a drunken mob was waiting for his arrival, and that all the men who were found in the congregation would be pressed for soldiers. Others said that the meeting-house would be set on fire, or pulled to the ground. To these rumours Wesley replied, “Our only way is to make the best use of it while standing,” and into it he went and expounded the tenth chapter of Matthew. Finding a widow’s house at Chinley too small, he stood upon a chair near to a miller’s dam. This so enraged the miller that he let off the water so as to drown Wesley’s voice, but failed; and the truth succeeded. On another occasion, while Wesley was preaching at Gwennap in Cornwall, two men, raging like madmen, rode into the midst of the people, and began to lay hold of some of them. In the midst of these interruptions Wesley and his friends began to sing. Mr. B., the magistrate, lost his patience and shouted to his officers, “Seize him! seize him! I say, seize the preacher, for his majesty’s service.” This not being done, he cursed them; leaped off his horse, and caught hold of Wesley, crying out, “I take you to serve his majesty.” Wesley

walked with him for three-quarters of a mile, when the courage of the mighty man failed him, and he was glad to let the parson go free. The day after the rabble surrounded the house at Falmouth, crying out, "Bring out the Canorum! Where is the Canorum (a nick-name in Cornwall for Methodist)?" They forced open the outer door, and setting their shoulders to the inner one, cried out, "Avast, lads! avast!" Away went the hinges. Wesley said to the mob one by one, "To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? or you? or you?" All seemed speechless. Wesley reached the open street, where he asked, "Neighbours, countrymen! do you desire to hear me speak?" "Yes, yes!" was the prompt reply; "he shall speak, he shall: no one shall hinder him!" Wesley was rescued, and he was despatched from Falmouth by water; but his enemies ran along the shore to receive him on his landing. Speaking to the leader, Wesley said, "I wish you a good night," to which the wretch answered, "I wish you were in hell!" On his way to Helston five well-dressed horsemen met him with a special warrant from the magistrate for his arrest. He rode in their midst, and announced who he was; and after a time he was allowed to go on his way. In the midst of all this kind of opposition Wesley kept on going to and fro, preaching from "Love your enemies," "Watch and pray," and "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." At one place, while he was preaching he was pushed by the people off from a high wall, on which he was standing. At another the constables came and read the proclamation against riots. At another one of his hearers was seized by the churchwardens, and pressed for a soldier.

We find him again on February 17th, 1746, setting out, on horseback from Bristol to Newcastle, at a time of year when days were short and the weather rough: this was a journey of between three and four hundred miles. It took him ten weary days to perform it, because roads were bad, and brooks swollen so much that he often had to go round about through fields. In Staffordshire the rain turned to snow, with a north wind, which soon crusted him over from head to foot. In Leeds the mob pelted him with whatever they could lay their hands upon. Some of the missiles struck him in the face; but none seriously hurt him. At Keighley the snow was so deep he was obliged to give up his intention of travelling through the dale. At Placey he preached out of doors in the midst of a "vehement" storm, which, however, he and the congregation "regarded not." At Oakhill, near Shepton Mallet,

the curate hired a drunken mob to make a disturbance, who, in addition to "screaming out a psalm" while Wesley preached, pelted the congregation with stones and dirt. At Neath a drunken fiddler and a gentleman did their best to interrupt him, but failed. At Leominster, when preaching on a tombstone in the parish churchyard the mob "roared on every side"; the bells were set ringing and the organ was played; so that he had to retire to the the corn-market, where he had a "quiet time." At Sevenoaks he preached "to a large, wild company," one of whom cursed bitterly.

On setting out for Cornwall in 1747 he was met at St. Agnes by a rabble who threw dirt and clods, and a man said, "If he preaches, I'll stone him," and filled his pockets ready for the purpose. Wesley took for his text, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." The result was the man's courage failed: he dropped stone after stone from his pocket; and went away with the impression that the preacher was something wonderful. At Newlyn some poor wretches thrust Wesley down a bank from which he was preaching. At Port Isaac the mob hallooed and shouted. At Camelford he tells us that only one stone struck him. Again in 1748 he visited Newlyn, where his congregation were "a rude, gaping, staring rabble rout; some or other of whom were throwing dirt or stones continually." At Tiverton a mob led by sundry footmen, came with horns, drums, and fifes, and created all the disturbance in their power. They seized a chimney sweeper, and half-murdered him ere he could escape from their clutches. The mayor in a fury said "there was no need of any new religion in that town." "There is," said he, "the old church and the new church; that is one religion. Then there is parson K——'s at the Pitt meeting, and parson W——'s in Peter Street, and old parson T——'s at the meeting in Newport Street: four ways of going to heaven already; enough in conscience; and if the people won't go to heaven by one or other of these ways, by —— they shan't go to heaven at all herefrom, while I am mayor of Tiverton." At Taunton a mob of "boys and gentlemen" made so much noise, that Wesley had to leave off preaching in the street and to finish in a room, and when they came out he and his congregation were pelted with all sorts of missiles. Going to Hull he met with a rough reception. On landing at the quay, which was covered with people, he heard them saying "Which is he? which is he?" But for the present they only stared, inquired, and laughed. At night when he preached, thousands gave serious attention, "but many behaved as



if possessed with Moloch: clods and stones flew on every side." On arriving at his lodgings, "the windows were smashed; and till midnight, he and his host were, more or less, saluted with oaths, curses, stones, and brickbats." At York a magistrate stuck up some bills against him; and as soon as Wesley passed into the city he was saluted with bitter curses. At Barnard Castle, the mob was numerous and loud, and they fetched out the fire-engine to play on the congregation.

At Bolton he had the town or market cross for his pulpit, and a vast number of "utterly wild" people for his audience. Once or twice he was thrust down from the steps whence he was preaching. Stones were thrown at him, and so on. At Astbury a lawless mob headed by "Drummer Jack" surrounded the preaching house and tried to drown Wesley's voice while preaching. At Wadsworth "the rabble pelted them with dirt and stones, and abused them in the grossest manner." At Rochdale (1749) on entering the town a vast multitude of the people shouted, cursed, blasphemed, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. At Bolton stones were hurled and windows broken. At Canterbury he was not only opposed by mobs, but by parsons. At Shaftesbury a constable said: "Sir, the mayor discharges you from preaching in this borough any more." To which Wesley answered, "While King George gives me leave to preach I shall not ask leave from the Mayor of Shaftesbury." At Dudley he was welcomed by a "dismal screaming."

Speaking of Wakefield he says, "All the people were as roaring lions; and the honest man did not dare to let me preach in his yard, lest the mob should pull down his houses." At Sheffield he preached "in the shell of the new house," and adds, "all is peace here now, since the trial at York, at which the magistrates were sentenced to rebuild the house which the mob had pulled down." At Shepton-Mallet a hired and drunken mob, pelted him and his companion, Robert Swindells, with "dirt, stones, and clods in abundance"; "beside breaking the windows of the house at which he stayed, they took it by storm and threatened to make it a heap of burning ruins." At Halifax, in 1748, he attempted to preach at the market-cross to "an immense number of people roaring like the waves of the sea." A man threw money among the people. Wesley was besmeared with dirt, and had his cheek laid open by a stone. He then went to Bradford, where the only person who misbehaved was the parish curate. At Roughlee, near Colne, a drunken rabble was led on by a deputy constable with clubs and staves. Wesley was struck

in the face by one; another threw a stick at him; a third cursed and swore, and flourished his club as if he meant to murder Wesley, and then tried to make him promise never to come again. After two hours' detention before the magistrate he was allowed to leave: the mob followed with oaths, curses, and stones; and at length beat him to the ground and forced him back to the house. Some of the Methodists who were present were beaten with clubs; some trampled in the mud; one had to leap from a rock ten or twelve feet high into the river; and others had to run for their lives amidst all sorts of missiles thrown after them.

At Faversham "the mob and the magistrates had agreed together to drive Methodism out of the town." In 1766 at Evesham, the mob encouraged by the magistrate made noise enough; but as they used neither stones nor dirt "we were well contented," says Wesley in his quaint way. At Burton the mob had smashed the windows of one of the Methodists. At Sheffield two Methodist meeting-houses had been demolished by the mobs; and on March 26th, 1766, Wesley says, "There has been much disturbance here—but to-night all was peace." They however broke out again, and continued for three months longer. At Wigan he preached to a large number, "mixed with a few as stupidly insolent creatures as I ever saw." At York the rector, who had on a previous occasion, warned his congregation against "that vagabond Wesley," seeing him in church and not knowing him, unconsciously asked him to preach, thinking he was a clergyman. After the service the rector asked the clerk if he knew him, to which he replied, "Sir, he is the vagabond Wesley, against whom you warned us." "Indeed," replied the astonished rector, "we are trapped; but never mind, we have had a good sermon."

At Heptonstall, an attorney attempted to interrupt him. At Todmorden, Wesley found the clergyman "slowly recovering from a violent fit of palsy, with which he was struck immediately after he had preached a violent sermon against the Methodists." At Nantwich (1753) he was, "saluted with curses and hard names," and soon afterwards the mob pulled down the chapel. At Chipping Norton a man by main force pushed him back from the pulpit, in which violence he was joined by eight or ten others. Visiting Huddersfield in 1757 he says: "A wilder people I never saw in England. The men, women, and children filled the streets as we rode along, and appeared just ready to devour us. They were, however, totally quiet while I preached: only a few pieces of dirt were thrown; and the bellman came in the middle of the sermon. I had almost done when they

began to ring the bells." At Padiham, he preached to "a large wild congregation." One of those present was grandson to the woman who ran after Wesley brandishing an axe, and threatening she would kill him. At Durham he preached to a congregation "large and wild." At Pocklington he preached in the street; a large mob assembled; and, "for fear they should not make noise enough, the churchwarden hired men to ring the bells." At Gram-pound the mayor sent two constables saying, "Sir, the mayor says you shall not preach within the borough." Wesley replied: "The mayor has no authority to hinder me; but it is a point not worth contesting. So I went about a musket shot farther, and left the borough to Mr. Mayor's disposal." At Norwood, a gang of godless rioters surrounded the house of one Samuel Cole; and because the Methodists held their meetings in it threatened to burn it down. The leader however was sent to Newgate prison. At Fareham "a wild multitude" was his congregation. In 1759 at Horncastle he was roughly saluted by a mob. At Manchester "wretched magistrates by refusing to suppress had encouraged the rioters, and had long occasioned tumults." At Maxfield "abundance of people ran together, but wild as colts untamed." At Gainsborough he preached to "a rude, wild multitude." At North Searle though he "spoke as plainly as he could, many seemed to understand me no more than if I was talking Greek." At Norwich, "I preached to a large, rude, noisy congregation." In 1761 he says on arriving at Wolverhampton: "None had yet preached abroad in this furious town; but I resolved, with God's help, to make a trial, and ordered a tub to be set in the inn yard. Such a number of wild men I have seldom seen; but they gave me no disturbance." At Hartlepool a "gentleman," so-called, hired a base fellow to strip himself naked and swim the river so as to disturb the hearers.

At Rotherham, in 1761, while Wesley was preaching the opening sermon of the chapel, the rabble drove in an ass, which stood still in the aisle and remained quiet the whole service time, and then turned round and walked away. Wesley said this ass was the most attentive hearer he ever had. At Gainsborough in the Old Hall he had a "mixed multitude, part civil, part rude as bears." At Barrow the mob meant to do violence; but their hearts failed, and they only gave a few shouts. The same at Horncastle. At Sibsey, "there were a few wild colts." In 1762 he went to Exeter, and his congregation consisted of only two women and one man. "This comes of omitting field-preaching" was the remark. So out

of doors he went, and preached on Southernhay Green to "a multitude of people ; but a lewd, profane, drunken vagabond had so stirred up many of the baser sort, that there was much noise, hurry, and confusion." At Polperro, Cornwall, "an old, grey-headed sinner bitterly cursed the Methodists." In 1764 on attempting to preach in the market-place at Derby, as soon as he had announced his text, the mob raised such a noise that he could not be heard ; and he had to retire, an innumerable company following after him throwing stones.

At Doncaster the rabble was rude and violent. At Lowestoft he says : "A wilder congregation I have never seen ; but the bridle was in their teeth. All attended, and a considerable part seemed to understand something of what was spoken." On his way to North Tawton in 1765 he was completely hindered from preaching through an incident which he relates as follows : "I went to the door of an inn ; but I had hardly ended the psalm, when a clergyman came, with two or three (by the courtesy of England, called) 'gentlemen.' After I had named my text, I said, 'There may be some truths which concern some men only ; but this concerns all mankind.' The minister cried out, 'That is false doctrine ; that is predestination.' Then the roar began, to second which they had brought a huntsman with his hounds ; but the dogs were wiser than the men, for they could not bring them to make any noise at all. One of the 'gentlemen' supplied their place. He assured us he was such, or none would have suspected it ; for his language was as base, foul, and pertly, as ever was heard at Billingsgate. 'Dog,' 'rascal,' 'puppy,' and the like terms, adorned almost every sentence. Finding there was no probability of a quiet hearing, I left him the field, and withdrew to my lodging."

John Wesley writes, August 30th, 1766 : "We rode to Stalbridge, long the seat of war by a senseless, insolent mob, encouraged by their 'betters' so-called, to outrage their quiet neighbours. For what? Why, 'they were mad ; they were Methodists' : so, to bring them to their senses, they would beat their brains out. They broke the windows, leaving not a whole pane of glass ; spoiled their goods ; and assaulted their persons with dirt, rotten eggs, and stones, whenever they appeared in the street. But no magistrate, though they applied to several, would show them either mercy or justice." Ultimately the case was taken to the Queen's Bench ; and the guilty parties had to pay the penalty. At Ashburton "many behaved with decency ; but the rest with such stupid rudeness as I have not

seen for a long time in any part of England." At Plymouth while he was preaching a large stone was thrown in at one of the windows, and fell at his feet. (1768) At Richmond he preached in the Market-place, the Yorkshire militia forming part of the congregation—"a rude rabble rout, without sense, decency, or good manners." (1769) At Bradford, Wilts, he "was surrounded by a noisy rabble." (1770) At Carlisle he says: "At almost every meeting the mob attended; stones and brick-bats were often thrown, and the Methodists hissed at and otherwise abused."

"I preached at Bingham, and really admired the exquisite stupidity of the people. They gaped and stared, while I was speaking of 'death' and 'judgment,' as if they had never heard of such things before. And they were helped by two surly, ill-mannered clergymen, who seemed to be just as wise as themselves." On July 8th, 1772, while at Halifax, a ruffian struck Wesley most violently in the face, when, with tears starting from his eyes, he quietly said, "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." He meant to preach at High Wycombe, in 1777; but, as he says, "good Mr. James had procured a drummer to beat his drum at the window of the chapel." This completely hindered him from doing more than pray and sing by turns during the time devoted to the service.

Forty-two times Wesley crossed the Irish Channel, and spent at least half a dozen years of his life among the people. His first sermon was on August 9th, 1747, in St. Mary's Church, Dublin, to "as gay and senseless a congregation as I ever saw." At Cork the mayor came with the town-drummers and an immense rabble, and continued drumming as long as Wesley continued preaching. At Bandon for four hours the mob of Cork marched in procession, and then burnt him in effigy. He arrived at Aymo on horseback at midnight; but the woman who kept the inn refused to admit him, and let loose four dogs to worry him. On another visit (1752), he says: "Last month, a large mob assaulted the new house here, and did considerable damage. Several of the rioters were committed to Newgate. The bills<sup>1</sup> were found against them all, and they were tried ten days since; but, in spite of the clearest evidence, a packed jury brought them in, 'Not guilty.'" At Waterford, "the rabble cursed, shouted, and hallooed most furiously." In 1756, while preaching at Clonmel, a drunken man came marching down the street attended by a Popish mob, with a club in one hand and a large

<sup>1</sup> Wesley of course means, and probably wrote, "true bills."



cleaver in the other, grievously cursing and blaspheming, and swearing he would cut off the preacher's head. The brute began to strike the congregation, and wounded the constable in the wrist. Ultimately he was, however, lodged in gaol.

At Ennis he preached in the court-house, "to a huge, wild, unawaked multitude, Protestants and Papists, many of whom would have been rude enough, if they durst." In 1758 he preached at Longford, in the yard of the great inn, to "the rudest, surliest, wildest people" he had seen in Ireland. At Minola, Mayo, he found the Papists unchanged—retaining the same bitterness and thirst for blood as ever, and as ready to cut the throats of Protestants as they were in the former century. He left the place at four in the morning without either bridle or saddle. At Athlone a few eggs and stones were thrown. At Belturbet there was neither Papist nor Protestant in the place; but "abundance of Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, and common swearers." At Sligo "the congregation was a little disturbed by two or three giddy officers." At Carrick-on-Shannon, he had no sooner begun to preach than a magistrate with a mob and drum came to silence him, saying, "You shall not preach here to-day." To which Wesley replied, "Sir, I don't intend it, for I have preached already." At Clare he preached to "a wild, staring people," whom the soldiers kept quiet. At Armagh an officer came to him and said, "Sir, the mayor orders me to inform you, you shall not preach in this town." At Waterford in 1773, the Papists created a riot, in which heavy blows were given; and at Enniskillen the mob smashed his carriage.

It is absolutely impossible to realize the amount of work of this kind that Wesley performed. Immediately the Conferences were over, we find him starting off on his journeys. To and from the Land's End to London; then from London to the north of Scotland; then through the Principality of Wales, as well as the green isle of Ireland, we find him plodding; and he repeated his journeys year after year. Amid all kinds of difficulties and weather, still he went on his way, either to break up fresh ground, or to strengthen and confirm the work which had already been done. It is in this kind of labour that he stands out pre-eminent. Scarcely before or since has there been any one to approach him. We are, in these days of ease, startled at the daring spirit with which he faced and overcame the obstacles which ever and anon confronted him; and at the self-denying and persistent manner in which he pursued his work. No

wonder he at last exercised so much influence over those who knew him! The only wonder is that he was able to do so much, and to live so long, considering the hardships and dangers through which he had to pass.

Nor must it be forgotten that it was a work he did because he felt it needful—not because he liked it. Can anything be more simple and honest than the way in which he puts the case? He says: “What marvel the devil does not like field-preaching! Neither do I. I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, and a handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal, if I do not trample all these under foot, in order to save one soul?” And, again, when in the days of his success he is giving his reasons for continuing the work: “Who can say the time for field-preaching is over, while—(1) greater numbers than ever attend; (2) The converting as well as convincing power of God is eminently present.”

Over and over again he had many narrow escapes of losing his life by accident, in addition to the risks he ran from the opposition of the rabble. At one time we find him telling us of his being thrown from his horse near Warminster. At another, while descending a steep bank near Shepton-Mallet, his horse and himself tumbled over one another. In Ireland his horse became restive, and “fell head over heels.” If we remember that he had to travel before turnpike roads were known, and also that no stage-coach went farther north than York, it may help us to realize the contrast between travelling then and now. Coming up from Newcastle with John Downes, when they reached Darlington their horses lay down and died. When on one of his journeys from London to Bristol his saddle slipped upon his horse’s neck; he was jerked over the horse’s head, and the horse itself ran back to Smithfield. Crossing the river Trent once from Epworth, in a ferry boat with cattle and men, in a terrible storm, the horses and men rolled over one another in the middle of the river; and Wesley was pinned down with a large iron bar, unable to stir. Such are a few illustrations of the “perils” to which he was exposed in his journeys as an itinerant preacher.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### *The Revivalist.*

WHETHER we are prepared to endorse in all their details the doctrines which form the prominent feature of Wesley’s teachings,

or whether we agree with him in the course of action he felt called upon to take in reference to the Established Church, we ought to be ready to acknowledge that his abundant labours have been instrumental in accomplishing a vast amount of moral good, which it seems scarcely probable could have been effected by any other means or by any other man.

When he entered upon his public work, the whole nation was, to say the least of it, in an awfully dark condition as to spiritual things. The doctrines of the Reformation were practically ignored by the clergy of the Church to which he belonged. Atheism, with its attendant consequences in the shape of vice, immorality, and profaneness, had assumed a fearful aspect. Gross darkness covered the clergy, and gross darkness the people. To check and destroy, if possible, this state of things was the steady, uniform, persistent object Wesley proposed to himself: and to attain this end, he seems to have felt that no labour was too severe, and no suffering too intense. In the attempt to achieve this noble enterprise, and to secure its success, he relinquished the prospects of every earthly good, and entered upon such a course of unremitting toil as the world has seldom witnessed. Ease was a thing with which he was altogether unacquainted. On one occasion, on the contrary, he is reported as having said: "Leisure and I have taken leave of each other. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me." Never was there a case in which such a resolution was more honourably observed or diligently carried out. His uniform prayer was, "Lord, let me never live to be useless; but may I

"My body, with my charge, lay down,  
And cease at once to work and live."

And in a most remarkable manner he was able to do the one, and realize the other. With his usual frankness he said in 1790: "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God! I do not slack my labours. I can preach and write still." And then after a time he added, "I will do a little for God, before I drop into the dust." Such was the constant purpose of his life up to its very end.

Like the apostles, Wesley found that his preaching did not greatly lay hold of those in high positions in society. "Not many

mighty, and not many noble," were influenced by his labours; still he numbered a few families of good position among his followers, upon whom he exercised a powerful influence for good. A striking illustration of this may be gathered from the following incident, which took place at the house of a gentleman who had invited him to take luncheon with one of his preachers after Wesley had done preaching. This preacher, like many of the class during that time, was a man of very plain manners, and quite unconscious of the restraints belonging to good society. While talking with the daughter of their host, who was remarkable for her beauty, and who had been profoundly impressed with Wesley's preaching, he noticed that she wore a number of rings. During a pause in the meal the preacher took hold of the lady's hand, and raising it in the air, called Wesley's attention to the sparkling jewels. "What do you think of this, sir," he said, "for a Methodist's hand?" The girl turned crimson. For Wesley, with his known and expressed aversion to finery, the question was a peculiarly awkward one. But the aged evangelist showed a tact which Chesterfield might have envied. He looked up with a quiet, benevolent smile, and simply said, "The hand is very beautiful."

The blushing beauty had expected something far different from a reproof wrapped up with such felicity in a compliment. She had the good sense to say nothing; but when a few hours later she appeared in Wesley's presence, the beautiful hand was stripped of every ornament except what nature had given.

It may for a moment be worth while to notice how Wesley set himself to work in this matter. He tells us, "The points I chiefly insisted upon were four: First, that orthodoxy, or right opinion, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part at all: that neither does religion consist in negatives, in bare harmlessness of any kind; not merely in externals, in doing good, or using the means of grace, in works of piety, or of charity: that it is nothing short of, or different from, the mind that was in Christ Jesus; the image of God stamped upon the heart; inward righteousness, attended with the peace of God and joy in the Holy Ghost. Secondly, that the only way to this religion is repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, that by this faith, he that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, is justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And, lastly, that being justified by faith, we taste of the heaven to which we are going; we are holy

and happy ; we tread down sin and fear, and sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

To preach to such multitudes of people day after day without seeing results of some kind would, in the very nature of things, be impossible. Wesley always aimed at convincing the ungodly of their wickedness ; and he succeeded to such an extent that the most debased and wicked among the people were pricked in their hearts, and the most remarkable results followed. Some cried out aloud. Some were strongly convulsed. Men and women here and there fell to the ground as if they had been struck down by some mighty power they could not resist. His own voice very frequently could not be heard in consequence of the cries and groanings of those who were calling aloud for salvation. Even the most sceptical who came were sometimes among the most earnest in their solicitude for mercy and forgiveness. Scenes of the wildest confusion, in which people sank down as if dead, resulted in giving him, at Reading John Cennick, and at Bristol Thomas Maxfield, his first two lay-preachers. At the latter place several persons were in such anguish of mind that he and others continued in prayer with them through the night, and until nine o'clock the next morning—fifteen hours ! Surely he must have felt that he was engaged in a work upon which his Master was giving him sure signs of approval.

It was impossible in the very nature of things for him to go on day after day preaching to such immense masses of people as we have already described, without producing some good results. He was labouring with the assurance that God's "word would not return unto Him void," and consequently he expected to see the "wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Nor in this was he disappointed. Results of the most extraordinary character attended his preaching ; and whether we can account for the special physical effects or not, we cannot deny that over and over again, the same thing occurred. The moral and spiritual results at length became so fully recognized, and these continue with us to this day in such abundance, that we must acknowledge John Wesley did not labour in vain, nor spend his strength for nought.

Let us then take a glance at some of the facts which amply testify to the value of his labours as a Revivalist in the midst of the spiritual darkness with which he so energetically contended. We have already seen the opposition it raised. Now let us note the good results which followed.



The great Methodist revival in England began in 1739. On New Year's Day Wesley was present with about sixty others at a remarkable love-feast in Fetter Lane, which lasted until three o'clock in the morning. The power of God came so mightily upon those thus met together that many cried out for exceeding joy; others fell prostrate on the ground: and all joined in singing, "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." The next day, after holding a conference, "we parted," says Whitefield, "with a full conviction that God was going to do great things for us." On January 7th they held another love-feast, and spent the whole night in prayer. Wesley, writing to Whitefield in February, says: "Our Lord's hand is not shortened among us. Yesterday I preached at St. Katherine's, and at Islington, where the church was as hot as some of the Society's rooms used to be. The fields, after service, were white with people praising God. . . . At the Savoy on Thursday evening, we have usually two or three hundred; most of them, at least, thoroughly awakened." Wesley, hearing at Oxford that a woman was most violently opposed to the revival, went to her, and argued with her. This enraged her more. Wesley began to pray, and in a few minutes the woman fell down in extreme agony, both of body and soul, and soon after cried out, "Now I know I am forgiven for Christ's sake"; and from that moment she set her face as a flint to declare the faith which before she opposed. Speaking of the congregations in other places, Hutton says, they "were composed of every description of persons, who, without the slightest attempt at order, assembled, crying 'Hurrah!' with one breath; and with the next bellowing and bursting into tears on account of their sins: some poking each other's ribs, and others shouting 'Hallelujah!'"

The same thing occurred in connection with meetings in private houses. Wesley began expounding the Epistle to the Romans and other portions of the New Testament at Bristol, and he tells us:

"*April 17.* At Baldwin Street, we called upon God to confirm His word. Immediately, one that stood by cried aloud with the utmost vehemence, even as if in the anguish of death. But we continued in prayer till a new song was put into her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God. Soon after, two other persons were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietude of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Saviour.

"*April 21.* At Weavers' Hall, a young man was suddenly seized

with a violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes sank to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, till He raised him up full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

"*April 24.* At Baldwin Street, a young man, with a sharp though short agony both of body and mind, found his soul filled with peace, knowing in whom he had believed.

"*April 26.* At Newgate, I was led to pray that God would bear witness to His word. Immediately one, and another, and another, sank to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God on her behalf, and He turned her heaviness into joy.

"*May 1.* At Baldwin Street, my voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some and the cries of others calling aloud to Him that is mighty to save; and ten persons then began to say, 'My Lord, and my God!' A Quaker who stood by was very angry, and biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was terrible to behold. We prayed for him; and he soon lifted up his head with joy, and joined us in thanksgiving."

These are but a few samples from his "Journal." It is not for us to deny the facts, although we may not be able to understand them. The best plan is to act upon Wesley's words: "From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him." Wesley's preaching on Kennington Common, Moorfields, and other parts of the metropolis was also attended with great success, although scarcely any of these "manifestations" occurred. And notwithstanding many things which have puzzled all who have looked into the matter, Wesley himself appears to have been fully satisfied that the work was genuine.

In 1740, Wesley writes that at Bristol "convictions sank deeper and deeper; love and joy are more calm, even, and steady." Again: "The cries of desire, joy, and love were on every side." At Newcastle-upon-Tyne, "the poor people were ready to tread me under foot, out of pure love and kindness." At Epworth, his sermon on his father's grave was attended with amazing power. On one occasion the people on every side wept aloud; and on another, several dropped down as dead: his voice was drowned by the cries of penitents, and many in that old churchyard there and then found peace with God. A gentleman who had not been inside a place of worship for thirty years stood like a statue. "Sir, are

you a sinner?" asked Wesley. "Sinner enough," was the reply, with tears in the eyes of himself, his wife, and his servant.

Such was the profound impression produced upon his brother-in-law, a clergyman, when he heard Wesley preach, that the former wrote him, saying: "Your presence creates an awe, as if you were an inhabitant of another world. I cannot think as you do; but I retain the highest veneration and affection for you. The sight of you moves me strangely. My heart overflows with gratitude. I cannot refrain from tears when I reflect, This is the man, who at Oxford was more than a father to me; this is he whom I have heard there expound or dispute publicly, or preach at St. Mary's with such applause. I am quite forgotten. None of the family ever honour me with a line! Have I been ungrateful? I have been passionate, fickle, a fool; but I hope I shall never be ungrateful."

Within eight months of Wesley's entering Newcastle above eight thousand persons joined the Society: so marvellous were the results of his labours. Yet he writes: "I never saw a work of God, in any other place, so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rose step by step. Not so much seemed to be done at any one time as had frequently been done at Bristol or London; but something at every time." And when he left the town on the last day of 1742, he preached a sermon of two hours' continuance in the open air; and the men, women, and children alike hung upon him, unwilling to part with him.

Writing to his friend Blackwell, February, 1748, Wesley says: "Both in Ireland, and in many parts of England, the work of our Lord increases. At Leeds only, the Society, from a hundred and eighty, is increased to above five hundred persons." In 1749, so great had been the progress of the work, that Horace Walpole says: "If you ever think of returning to England, you must prepare yourself with Methodism. This sect increases as fast as any religious nonsense ever did. . . . The Methodists love your big sinners, as proper subjects to work upon; and, indeed, they have a plentiful harvest," etc. Visiting Ireland, at Athlone, at the close of his sermon he asked, "Which of you will give yourself, soul and body, to God?" Mrs. Glass responded with a cry which almost shook the house, "I will! I will!" Four others followed; and the scene became exciting. Numbers began to cry aloud for mercy; and in four days more found peace with God than had done in sixteen months before." Wesley went to Bolton, where he found that

Rochdale "lions" were as "lambs" in comparison; but after preaching thrice, such was the effect that before he left he and his party "could walk through every street, none molesting or speaking except to thank or bless them."

In his usual practical way, Wesley appealed to men of reason and religion, who were doubtful about the genuineness of these revivals, and whether they were the work of God, in the following terse words: "You have all the proof of this you can reasonably expect or desire. That, in many places, abundance of notorious sinners are totally reformed, is declared by a thousand eye and ear witnesses both of their present and past behaviour. What more would you have? What pretence can you have for doubting any longer? Do you delay fixing your judgment, till you see a work of God without any stumbling-block attending it? That never was yet, nor ever will be. 'It must needs be that offences come.' And scarce ever was there such a work of God before, with so few as have attended this."

In this way he calmly confronted his opponents with the facts. Great revivals in all ages have been attended with some things which sober-minded Christians have deplored; but it is better to have these than be without a revival at all: and the proper thing for such sober Christians to do—is to try and remove every kind of needless hindrance out of the way, rather than allow it to hinder the work of God.

Speaking of his success in Ireland up to that time (1750), he writes: "I had the satisfaction of observing how greatly God has blessed my fellow-labourers, and how many sinners were saved from the error of their ways. Many of these had been eminent in all manner of sins. Many had been Roman Catholics; and I suppose the number of these would have been greater, had not the good Protestants, as well as Popish priests, taken pains to hinder them." Preaching to a crowded congregation at Shaftesbury, he says: "Many were in tears; and many others were filled with joy unspeakable."

But great as had been his success up to this time, a far more extraordinary development was yet to take place. Speaking of 1760, Wesley says: "Here began that glorious work of 'sanctification' which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years. From time to time it spread, first through parts of Yorkshire, afterwards in London, then through most parts of England; next to Dublin, Limerick, and through all the south and west of Ireland. And

wherever the work of sanctification increased, the whole work of God increased in all its branches." For several years it did advance with deepening effect. In 1762, Wesley remarked that his brother had told him some years before that the day of the Methodist Pentecost had not fully come; but he had no doubt it would, and then when it did, they would hear of persons sanctified as frequently as they had thus far heard of persons justified. "It was now fully come. This year from the beginning to the end was a year never to be forgotten. Such multitudes of sinners converted in all parts of England." Wesley in his "Journal" for several years records facts illustrative of the spread of this deepening of spiritual life, and its salutary effect on the people. To aid this wherever he went, Wesley preached on such topics as would be appropriate. At Manchester he exhorted the Societies to "go on unto perfection," and a flame was kindled which he trusted neither "men nor devils would ever be able to quench." In London all the Societies were revived; "many believers entered into such a rest as it was not in their hearts before to conceive." Congregations were increased. The godless were awakened more numerous than ever. At Bristol he said, "the Society was larger than it had been for years; at Liverpool there was such a religious excitement as had never been known before"; indeed, as he adds, "God was pleased to pour out His Spirit this year on every part of England and Ireland, in a manner we have never seen."

After continuing his regular rounds year by year, preaching to thousands, we find him thus recording one of those scenes with which he was much pleased. At Stockton "I found an uncommon work of God among children, upwards of sixty of whom, from the age of six to fourteen, were under serious impressions, and earnestly desirous to save their souls"; and he adds, "as soon as I came down from the desk, I was inclosed by a body of children, all of whom sank down upon their knees: so I kneeled down myself, and began praying for them." Is it any wonder that he also adds?—"Abundance of people ran back to the house. The fire kindled and ran from heart to heart, till few, if any, were unaffected. Is not this a new thing in the earth? God begins His work in children. Thus it has been in Cornwall, Manchester, Epworth, etc. Thus the flame spreads to those of riper years: till at length they all know Him and praise Him, from the least unto the greatest." Again, while Wesley was preaching in City-road Chapel in 1786, the power of God came down; and as he broke out in prayer, the congregation



burst out in a loud and general cry. At Burslem in 1787, there was "such an outpouring of the Spirit as had not been in any other part of the kingdom, particularly in the meetings for prayer. Fifteen or twenty have been justified in a day; some of them the most notorious abandoned sinners in all the country."

Marvellous results these certainly; but eternity alone will reveal their full extent. Beginning amid persecutions; ending with benedictions. Great had been his success up to 1780; but the results during the last ten years of his life appear to have been more than double the united results of the forty years preceding. Surely we may ask, "Was ever any man so honoured or blessed of God?"



## CHAPTER XIV.

### *The Politician.*

MANY efforts were put forth to make Wesley appear disloyal, but they failed. It mattered not to him whence an evil came, he was sure to try to remove it. Late on in life, when over seventy-four years of age, he thus accounts for his conduct. "It is my religion which obliges me to put men in mind to be subject to principalities and powers. Loyalty is with me an essential branch of religion; and which I am sorry any Methodist should forget. There is the closest connection, therefore, between my religious and political conduct; the self-same authority enjoining me to fear God, and to honour the king." It will thus be seen that he was not only a *Preacher*, but a *Politician*. As such during the famine of 1773 among other things he wrote "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions," in which among other things he asks, "But why is food so dear? To come to particulars, Why does bread-corn bear so high a price? To set aside partial causes (which, indeed, all put together, are little more than the fly upon the chariot wheel) the grand cause is, because such immense quantities of corn are continually consumed in distilling. Indeed, an eminent distiller near London hearing this, warmly replied, 'Nay, my partner and I generally distil but a thousand quarters a week.' Perhaps so. And suppose five-and-twenty distillers, in and near town, consume each only the same quantity; here are five-and-twenty thousand quarters a week—that is, above twelve hundred and fifty thousand a year, consumed in and about London! Add the distillers throughout

England; and have we not reason to believe that not a thirtieth or a twentieth part only, but less than half<sup>1</sup> the wheat produced in the kingdom, is every year consumed, not by so harmless a way as throwing it into the sea, but by converting it into deadly poison; poison that naturally destroys not only the strength and life, but also the morals of our countrymen? It may be objected, 'This cannot be. We know how much corn is distilled by the duty that is paid!' Is it indisputable that the full duty is paid for all the corn that is distilled? I have myself heard the servant of an eminent distiller aver, that for every gallon he distilled which paid duty, he distilled six which paid none. Yea, I have heard distillers themselves affirm, 'We must do this, or we cannot live.' It plainly follows we cannot judge from the duty that is paid, of the quantity of corn that is distilled. However, 'what is paid brings in a large revenue to the king.' Is this an equivalent for the lives of his subjects? Would his majesty sell a hundred thousand of his subjects yearly to Algiers, for four hundred thousand pounds? Surely no! Will he, then, sell them for that sum to be butchered by their own countrymen? 'But otherwise the swine for the navy cannot be fed.' Not unless they are fed with human flesh! Not unless they are fed with human blood! Oh, tell it not in Constantinople that the English raise the royal revenue by selling the flesh and blood of their countrymen." ("Works," vol. ix. p. 54.)

Not only did he thus denounce the wasting of the food of the people in this manner; but he also pointed out clearly and conclusively how the subject ought to be dealt with, as will be seen by the following remarks from his "Thoughts on Scarcity." "But how can the price of wheat and barley be reduced? By prohibiting for ever, by making a full end of that bane of health, that destroyer of strength, of life, of virtue—distilling." That this was no passing thought or hasty opinion may be gathered from the fact that more than ten years later he wrote a letter to the Hon. William Pitt, in which he says: "Servants of distillers inform me, that their masters do not pay for a fortieth part of what they distil. And this duty last year (if I am rightly informed) amounted only to £20,000. But have not the spirits distilled this year cost 20,000 lives of his majesty's liege subjects? Is not then the blood of these men vilely bartered for the £20,000—not to say anything of the enormous wickedness which has been occasioned thereby; and not to suppose that those poor wretches have any souls? But (to consider money alone)

<sup>1</sup> "Less than half": in modern language, "nearly half."

is the king a gainer or an immense loser? To say nothing of many millions of quarters of corn destroyed, which, if exported would have added more than £20,000 to the revenue—be it considered ‘Dead men pay no taxes.’ So that by the death of 20,000 persons yearly (and this computation is far under the mark), the revenue loses far greater [more] than it gains. But I may urge another consideration to you. You are a man. You have not lost human feelings. You do not love to drink human blood. You are a son of Lord Chatham. Nay, if I mistake not, you are a Christian. Dare you then sustain a sinking nation? Is the God whom you serve able to deliver you from ten thousand enemies? I believe He is. Nay, you believe it. Oh, may you fear nothing but displeasing Him!”

Wesley was a man who kept his eyes open wherever he went. He was an intelligent observer of little things. Nothing seemed to escape his notice. “Law reform” with us at this time is one of the great questions of the time. He, in his day, deeply felt its necessity; for speaking of a Chancery bill, he called it “a vile monster,” and termed the “villainous tautology of lawyers a scandal of our nation.” Sanitary matters also came within his scope, for we find him commending a plan for the building of houses whereby “both health and convenience are consulted.” And when remarking upon the filthy state of one of our splendid cities, he asks with great indignation, “Where are the magistracy, the gentry, the nobility, of the land? Will no lover of his country, or of decency and common sense, find a remedy?” He also strongly condemned the practice of burying people in a place set apart for public worship, and expressed his regret that so few persons, even of sense and piety, could feel the force of the considerations urged upon the subject. And as a proof of his own convictions, he left orders that his own remains should not be buried in the chapel, City-road.

He was far in advance, as we have seen in another place, as a political reformer in connection with the liquor traffic. He was equally earnest as to some other obligations arising out of political rights and duties. “Society” meetings were held to urge upon voters their Christian duty at an election; a pastoral address was published, in which *bribery* was denounced as a damnable sin. “What!” exclaimed Wesley, “will you sell your soul to the devil for a draught of drink, or for a morsel of bread? On no account take money, or money’s worth. Give, not sell, your vote.” To men of property he said in his short terse way, “Make your will before you sleep.”

He saw also the evils of Ireland arising from the non-residence of

her landed proprietors and capitalists; and long before the Catholic Relief Bill was passed, he said, "Nor is it any wonder that those who are born Papists, generally live and die such, when Protestants can find no better way to convert them than penal laws and Acts of Parliament." He says he "sees a curse in the pluralities and non-residence" of his own Church,—“evils that God alone can cure”; and before the “non-intrusion principle” of Scotland’s Kirk became a power and the people’s glory, he recognized its importance and its right. He complained of the unequal distribution of Members of Parliament throughout the country. Before the time of Indian Reform he mourned over India enslaved to a “company of merchants, and covered with fraud, oppression, and misery,” and remarked, “Wilt not thou visit for these things, O Lord? Shall the fool say is his heart, There is no God?”

Strong churchman as Wesley was in his general views, he was too wise to be altogether unmindful of the injury Christianity had suffered from its alliance with the State. Hence he says, “The greatest wound Christianity ever received; the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, the whole essence of true religion—was struck by Constantine, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power upon the Christians, more especially upon the clergy. Some supposed this event to be typified in the Revelation, by the ‘New Jerusalem coming down from heaven.’ Rather say, it was the coming of Satan, and all his legions, from the bottomless pit; seeing that, from that very time, he has set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian, as well as the Pagan world, with hardly any control.”

That he was no mere *party* politician may be gathered from the following singular incident. Among those who were willing to recognize Wesley’s integrity was General Washington, as may be gathered from the following incident. Rev. Richard Rodda, one of Wesley’s preachers, was travelling in America during the American War. He appears to have been under the influence of strong political feeling in favour of the mother country; and by incessant meddling with political subjects, he exposed himself to the wrath of the opposite party. One time in particular he was brought before Washington. The General asked him who he was. “One of Mr. Wesley’s preachers,” was Mr. Rodda’s reply. “Mr. Wesley,” rejoined Washington, “I know; I respect Mr. Wesley; but Mr. Wesley, I presume, never sent you to America to interfere with political

matters. Mr. Wesley sent you to preach the Gospel to the people. Now go you, and mind your own proper work; preach the Gospel, and leave politics to me and my brethren: we shall attend to that part of the work." He thus dismissed Mr. Rodda with this gentle reproof.

Wesley was equally clear and emphatic upon the subject of *slavery*, speaking of it as "that execrable sum of all villanies, commonly called the slave trade. I read of nothing like it in the heathen world, whether ancient or modern; and it infinitely exceeds, in every instance of barbarity, whatever Christian slaves suffer in Mohammedan countries." These were noble words to utter, especially if it be remembered that they were spoken sixty years before slavery was abolished by Great Britain.

One of the last things he did, only a few days before his death, was to write to Wilberforce, on which occasion he again speaks of slavery as "that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature—that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law*, in our colonies, that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villany is this!"

These sentiments are all the more remarkable when contrasted with the fact that Whitefield possessed slaves, and wrote a letter to Wesley in 1751 in which he tried to vindicate his conduct.

To the foregoing Wesley added the work of an *Educational Reformer*. Coming in contact with the ignorance of the masses of the people so directly as Wesley did in the mining and manufacturing districts, it is no wonder that he felt the great and paramount importance of doing what he could to lift them out of that condition by every legitimate means. Hence we find that from the very beginning of his efforts he devoted much time and thought towards making "the people called Methodists" an intelligent people. He was no friend of ignorant enthusiasm or unenlightened devotion. Hence, from the outset we find him starting schemes for the improvement of his followers. The school founded by him at Kingswood near Bristol he watched over with ever-increasing interest to the end of his life; and he selected for its first masters men whom he saw were specially gifted for the work. He was an ardent educationist, from the necessities of the case; and because he found also that in most of the schools available for the children of his ministers true piety was despised, and the pupils taught



to look upon Methodism as something to be derided rather than to be imitated or adopted.

To his educational operations he also added the preparation and issue of what at that time was a thing unknown—cheap books and tracts for the people. In this way he practically anticipated the work of the Religious Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and even the Bible Society itself. He encouraged all his people to read, and issued books best adapted to meet their need. He even commanded all his preachers to study diligently, and specially provided them with such books as would help them to do so in the most profitable manner. In this, as in many other respects, he was far in advance of the time in which he lived. He was no believer in the dogma that “ignorance is the mother of devotion”: on the contrary, he felt and knew that if his members were to be delivered from the debasing influences by which they were surrounded, or his ministers fitted to attract and keep the people who might come under their influence, they must be intelligent as well as devoted. To be well-informed, therefore, was to be well-armed against the prevailing errors and superstitions with which they would have to contend.

He was one of the first to recognize and adopt the idea of Sunday schools; and on referring to his having preached twice in Bingley Church on July 18th, 1784, he says: “Before service I stepped into the Sunday school, which contains two hundred and forty children, taught every Sunday by several masters, and superintended by a curate. So many children, in one parish, are restrained from open sin, and taught a little good manners, at least, as well as to read the Bible. I find these schools springing up wherever I go. Perhaps God may have a deeper end therein than men are aware of. Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?” During the same year, on the 1st of August, Dr. C. Bayley, who for ten years had been one of the masters of Kingswood School, but who was at that time a clergyman in Manchester, published an “Address to the Public on Sunday Schools,” which gave such an impetus to the movement that this ex-master of Kingswood School became one of the chief instruments of establishing Sunday schools in Manchester and its locality.

## CHAPTER XV.

*The Husband.*

OF the many noted saints the Church has known, of whom it might with truth be said, it had been better that they had never wedded—perhaps John Wesley stands out as the most conspicuous. Nor is this to be wondered at, if we thoroughly comprehend the absorbing character of the work to which he had given his life, and the complete devotedness with which he followed it from year to year. Evangelists like Wesley usually perform their work best alone; and it is no unreasonable thing to say that even Paul the Apostle would not have been able to accomplish so much, or to endure such privations, or to manifest such unselfish heroism, if he had been from time to time fascinated with the attractions and privileges which belong to a happy home. Human nature is after all but human. And we therefore must not be surprised, even in a case like Wesley's, where a marriage is contracted with the understanding that he is not to preach any fewer sermons, or travel any less distances, if the "gude wife" does not find occasion to complain of apparent neglect of her claims.

It appears that in his early days, when Wesley's principles were rather of a monastic and rigid character, Mary Granville, who afterwards became the wife and widow of the celebrated Dean Delany, began a correspondence with him of the most tender character. Mary, it appears, was at that time three years older than Wesley; and sought advice and guidance from him about her soul. This led to a correspondence between them, which continued for four years, under feigned names. Wesley called himself "Cyrus"; and Mary, "Aspasia." To use the words of Rev. L. Tyerman: "The correspondence is a puzzle. There is nothing that is sickly or merely sentimental; but, on both sides, there is an endearment which perplexes." Whatever may have been its real character, his brother Charles says he had "a fair escape" when he declined to become her husband.

His second experience in these matters occurred in Georgia; and here he was fairly ensnared. In this instance again the visit of a young enquirer after salvation opened the door. Sophia Christiana Hopkey appears to have been a bright young girl of good sense, and elegant person and behaviour. General Oglethorpe, a man of large influence in the colony, seems to have had a great desire to help on

the courtship. Just at that time Wesley was taken ill of a fever, and was confined to his house for a week, during which time Miss Hopkey was his vigilant, affectionate, and constant nurse; and Wesley, out of gratitude, felt interested in her. She, on the other hand, went so far as to study his taste as to her dress. At this time Wesley's life was after the form of a Protestant monk: he would have nothing to do with dissenters; found the truest saints in the Romish Church; and his other notions were after the same type, such as confession, penance, mortification of the flesh, mixing of water with the wine of the Communion, etc. Miss Sophia seems to have been, like many young ladies in the present day, charmed with this kind of thing, and supposed that with such perfect and flameless purity, there must be safety: so she took deep interest in his teachings; and when her health also gave way, and she plainly hinted of the necessity of returning to England, somehow (upon the lady's own testimony) he proposed marriage, which she did not refuse. And yet, strange to say, two or three days afterwards in Wesley's Journal we find he says: "Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. William Williamson, a person not remarkable for handsomeness; neither for wit, or knowledge, or sense; and least of all for religion." Four days after the engagement they were married. At this, as may be reasonably supposed, poor John was confounded; and yet he says again: "The day of their marriage completed the year from my first speaking to her. What Thou doest, O God, I know not now; but I shall know hereafter." He was soon to begin to know, for only eight days after the marriage her husband forbade her attendance at church, and prohibited her from speaking to Wesley. Four months afterwards on presenting herself at the Communion, Wesley reproved her for some things which he thought wrong. A month later he refused to admit her to the Lord's Table. The next day her husband issued a warrant for the apprehension of Wesley for defaming his wife, and claimed damages to the extent of £1000. This led to his leaving for England. Fifty years later he writes in his Journal, speaking of these words: "I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more; but one comfort is, He that made the heart can heal the heart."

No wonder he was in no haste to find himself in the toils of love again; but the time came some twelve years after, when he was forty-six years of age. A multitude of his friends were perpetually teasing him with the assurance that he ought to marry. Again he happened to be taken ill with a fever, and was waited upon by

a certain radiant, young, saintly woman, a widow, who had charge of the Orphan House at Newcastle where Wesley always made his home when in that locality. During his illness he says of her himself, "She was remarkably neat, nicely frugal, yet not sordid; gifted with a large amount of common sense, indefatigably patient and inexpressibly tender; quick, cleanly, and skilful, and of a mild, sprightly, cheerful, and yet serious temper; while, lastly, her gifts for usefulness were such as he had not seen equalled"; and when taunted with the lowliness of her origin, he nobly replied, "That was no objection to him; for he regarded her not for her birth, but for her qualifications."

Shortly after his recovery from sickness he offered to marry the young widow. She was amazed, and said, "This is too great a blessing for me. I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under heaven." They were engaged. But when it became known among the Societies it led to a regular storm. Meantime, while on a journey with Wesley in Derbyshire visiting the Societies, Grace fell in with a certain John Bennet, one of the preachers, who paid her some very special pressing attentions. She had previously been acquainted with him at Newcastle. As Wesley suspected, she had entered into a contract with him. When Wesley heard of it he quietly submitted, and said the marriage ought to go forward; and when he met the lady again he kissed her and said, "Grace Murray, you have broken my heart!" Within a week she and Bennet were married, and Wesley did not meet her again for thirty-nine years, when the meeting was very affecting.

By a singular coincidence his third and successful attempt at matrimony was also brought about by an illness. He happened to sprain his foot when forty-eight years of age, and found himself taken to the house of a well-to-do widow named Mrs. Vazeille, in Threadneedle Street. She appeared to have been as unlike the other two ladies as possible. She was nervous, acrimonious, of a sorrowful spirit, but in her way trying to do good. She was uneducated, and had no special brightness, or elegance, or grace, such as either of the others possessed. Of course when the news got abroad the world was again surprised. But at length these two were married. Looked at from every standpoint the marriage of Wesley to Mrs. Vazeille in 1751 seems to have been a great mistake, and illustrates with great force the truth of the proverb that, "great men are not always wise." He tells us that he married because he believed he could be more useful; but if we for a moment consider the character

and extent of his work, stretching as it did over the three kingdoms, it is difficult to see how he could in any way expect to accomplish it better as a married man, than as a single one. The only way therefore out of the difficulty is to confess that for once at least he made a false step. Other people have made unhappy marriages; and, like Wesley, have had to pay a heavy penalty. Thirty years afterward he wrote (October 12, 1781), "I was informed my wife died on Monday, October 8. This evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after." He must then have felt that a great burden had been removed. As a consequence of marrying, Wesley had of course to relinquish all his rights as a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. He cautiously gave up all share, interest, or management of his wife's property. She soon proved herself to be in every way unworthy. She was a complete vixen. She stopped, opened, and interpolated his letters, and even went so far as to forge some. She supplied false material to anonymous publications, which were attacking him in the vilest manner. For thirty years she attempted every kind of low annoyance and persecution; and when at length, she of her own accord, and without assigning any reason, left his house in London and started for her own in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, one cannot feel surprised that Wesley wrote the words so often quoted, "*Non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo*"—"I did not forsake her; I did not dismiss her; I will not recall her." Ten years later she died. Her tombstone commemorates her virtues as a parent and friend—but is silent about her as a wife.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Ruler.

THE year 1742 is noted in the annals of Methodism as the time when the Societies were first divided into "CLASSES." This came about in the following manner. Wesley had built his meeting-house in Bristol three years before; but a large debt still remained upon it. A meeting was called to take into consideration what was best to be done, when one of the members stood up and said, "Let every member of the Society give a penny a week till the debt is paid." But it was objected "Many of them are poor and cannot afford to do it." "Then," replied the member, "put eleven of the poorest with



me, and if they can give anything, well; I will call on them weekly: and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbours weekly, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." Wesley, writing about this, says: "It was done; and in a while some of these informed me they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, 'This is the thing, the very thing, we have wanted so long.'" So he called these weekly collectors together, and desired them to make particular inquiry into the behaviour of each of the members they visited. They did so; and as a result it was agreed that "to come to a sure and thorough knowledge of each member, there could be no better way than to divide the Society into classes like those at Bristol." So this was done, and Wesley at once appointed as leaders "those in whom he could most confide." "This," says Wesley, "was the origin of our 'classes,' for which I can never sufficiently praise God; the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest." Though it was in this way that the classes began, from time to time it was found needful to make certain changes, until at length it was decided that each "leader" should meet his members once a week at a time and place most convenient to the whole. Of course this arrangement did not meet with unqualified approval, but Wesley replied to all objections; and thus the work was from time to time consolidated.

Space will not permit to record the character and extent of Wesley's work at this period. He was incessantly on the move, preaching to immense multitudes, amid all kinds of opposition. In Staffordshire serious riots occurred. In Shields a set of comedians acted a farce called "Trick upon Trick; or, Methodism Displayed." At Epworth, after preaching on his father's tomb to an immense congregation, it being sacramental Sunday, the curate said, "Tell Mr. Wesley I shall not give *him* the sacrament; for he is not *fit*." Of this Wesley says, "How wise a God is our God! There could not have been so fit a place under heaven where this should befall me first, as my father's house, the place of my nativity, and the very place where, 'according to the strictest sect of our religion,' I had so long 'lived a Pharisee.' It was also fit, in the highest degree, that he who repelled me from that very table, where I had myself so often distributed the Bread of Life, should be one who owed his all in this world to the tender love which my father had shown to his, as well as personally to himself."

In Cornwall, which at that time was a hot-bed of smuggling, drunkenness, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, etc., the visit of the Wesleys resulted in riots and fearful opposition, mainly promoted by the parsons. The mob sang—

"Mr. Wesley's come to town,  
To try to pull the churches down."

In like manner persecution awaited him and his followers in all parts of the kingdom; but amid it all they continued to prosper: and as a result they were driven to defend themselves through the press, and in other ways, from the false statements and wicked things laid to their charge. The Societies increased so rapidly in all directions that Wesley, to make his wishes known, wrote and published at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on February 23rd, 1743, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules, of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle-on-Tyne." These, with some trifling alterations, continue in force to this day. Eleven days after the date they bear, we find Wesley reading them to the Society at Newcastle, and asking the members seriously to consider whether they were willing to observe them; and he records in his Journal: "At Newcastle, on Sunday, I read over in the Society the rules which all our members are required to observe, and desired every one seriously to consider whether he was willing to conform thereto or no. That this would shake many of them I knew well; and, therefore, on Monday, March 7th, I began to visit the classes again, 'lest that which is lame should be turned out of the way.' The number of those expelled the Society was sixty-four, seventeen for drunkenness, two for retailing spirituous liquors, etc.

Again, when visiting Kingswood, he says, he "expelled many members; among the rest seventeen for drunkenness, and five for retailing spirituous liquors."

That he was consistent in taking such a step may be gathered from the following extract from the Rules:—

"There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these Societies; *viz.*, a desire to flee from the wrath to come—to be saved from their sins. But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire for salvation:

"First, By doing no harm: by avoiding evil of every kind—especially that which is most generally practised, such as taking the

name of God in vain; the profaning the day of the Lord; drunkenness; buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity; <sup>1</sup> softness, or needless indulgence, etc.

"Second, By doing good: by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity doing good of every sort, and as far as possible to all men."

How fully he expected these "Rules" to be enforced may be gathered from the following:—

Wesley asks in the large "Minutes," 1744,—

"How shall we cure them of drinking drams?"

"Let no *preacher* touch them on any pretence!"

In the same "Minutes" he asks,—

"Do not Sabbath-breaking, dram-drinking, etc., still prevail in several places? How may these evils be remedied? Let us preach expressly on each of these heads! Let the *leaders* closely examine and exhort every person to put away the accursed thing! Let the preachers warn every Society that none who is guilty herein can remain with us."

Mr. Tyerman also acknowledges in his "Life of Wesley" that "When Wesley enacted rules, he meant them to be observed." Laxity in the enforcement of discipline was to him a thing intolerable. He was a thorough disciplinarian himself, and insisted that his preachers should copy his example. Good as were the first Methodists, they were not perfect. Then, as now, some were defective in their attendance at the weekly class. In certain instances, some were guilty of the crime of smuggling. Others, in moderation, were addicted to taking drams; and others, opium; and it often happened that the oldest Societies were the worst offenders. In 1776, both London and Newcastle were thus tainted, and Wesley was determined "with a strong hand to purge them." Hence the following extracts from a letter to Joseph Benson:—

"We must threaten no longer, but perform—without fear or favour; remove the leaders, whether of 'classes' or 'bands,' who do not watch over the souls committed to their care, as those that must give account. . . . If only six will promise you to sin no more, leave only six in Society. . . . Every preacher is concerned to see all our rules observed. . . . If any 'leader' oppose you, put another in his place," etc. etc.

<sup>1</sup> He explains the rare need of these drinks as follows: "True, these may have a place in medicine; although there would be rarely any occasion for them, were it not for the unskilfulness of the practitioner." (See page 99.)

In his directions to Band Societies as noted in Pierce's "Principles of Methodism," p. 105, and also in "Wesley's Works," vol. viii. p. 263, he says :—

"Taste no spirituous liquors, no dram of any kind, except prescribed by a physician."

"Touch no dram; it is liquid fire. It is a sure but slow poison. It saps the very springs of life. In Ireland, above all countries in the world, I would sacredly abstain from this, because the evil is so general" ("Works," vol. xii. p. 232).

In his "Directions to the Preachers" ("Works," vol. viii. p. 295) he asks :—

"Have those in Band left off snuff and drams?"

"No. Many are enslaved to one or the other."

"In order to redress this,—

"1st. Use no snuff. Let no preacher touch either on any account.

"2nd. Strongly dissuade our people from them.

"3rd. Answer their pretences, particularly curing colic.

"Strong, and more especially spirituous liquors, are a certain though slow poison. Experience shows that there is very seldom any danger in leaving them off all at once."

There is, it is true, one recommendation which appears to countenance the use of malt liquors; but it is so consistent with his other teaching that we willingly quote it, especially if it is remembered what darkness concerning the character and properties of such drinks prevailed at the time. He says,—

"Drink only water, if it agrees with your stomach; if not, good clear, *small* beer."

"Water is the wholesomest of all drinks: quickens the appetite and strengthens digestion most. Malt liquors (except clear, *small* beer, or ale of due age) are exceedingly hurtful to tender persons."

At the Conference (1778) remarks were made upon the nervous disorders from which many of the preachers suffered. Wesley was pressed for his opinion and advice, and replied:

"Advice is made for them who will take it. But who are they? One in ten or twenty? Then I advise,—

"1. Touch no dram, tea, tobacco, snuff.

"2. Eat very light—if any—supper," etc.

It will thus be seen that for nearly half a century Wesley by precept and example had set his face against the common practices

of drinking and smoking. And when we remember that he had given considerable attention to the laws of health, and was therefore not only a preacher and a politician, but also a physician, as his "Practice of Physic" will amply confirm, we shall conclude that his sentiments were worthy of careful consideration. In an article on "Nervousness and Low Spirits," which appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1786, he says:

"But what are the causes of this strange disorder (nervousness)? One cause is the use of spirituous liquors. This is one of the horrid effects which naturally follow that fashionable poison. That liquid fire lays the foundation of numberless diseases; and of this in particular. It is amazing that the preparing or selling this poison should be permitted, I will not say in any Christian country, but in any civilized State. 'Oh, it brings in a considerable sum of money to government!' True; but is it wise to barter men's lives for money? Surely, that gold is bought too dear if it is the price of blood. Does not the strength of every country consist in the number of its inhabitants? If so, the lessening their number is a loss which no money can compensate. So that it is inexcusable ill husbandry to give the lives of useful men for any sum of money whatever."

It will thus be seen that with a quickness of perception far in advance of any others in his day, he readily grasped the idea which is fast becoming accepted by wise politicians and moralists in modern times—that no government is justified in raising a revenue by demoralizing its people. Indeed, as he tells us in his *Journal*, "All my mind was set seriously to learn, know, and hence to do, what might be of public good." In carrying out this resolution he found that the first and foremost of his opponents were the very men who ought to have been his best friends—the clergy. They would not let him preach in their pulpits; so he had to preach in the open air. They meant to stop him; but he went out to the lost sheep, and began a work which thousands now will not let die.

Two or three other facts may be given as illustrations of the discerning way in which Wesley regarded the drinking customs of his day. In his "Plain Account of Kingswood School," printed in 1781, he says:—

"They drink water at their meals: and why do not all wise parents lead their children to do so from their infancy, seeing it is universally allowed to be the best diluter of food which is to be found on earth?"



As another sample of his clear perception of the danger connected with the use of wine take the following:—

"When stationed in Bath," says the Rev. Mr. Towle, "I was introduced to an aged man whom I understood to have been intimate with Mr. Wesley, and who was once a useful local preacher. We entered into conversation about Mr. Wesley's times, when, among other things, he observed,—

"On one occasion when Mr. Wesley dined with me, after dinner as usual I prepared a *little* brandy-and-water. On perceiving this, with an air of surprise he cried,—

"What! my brother; what's that?"

"It's brandy," said I: 'my digestion is bad; I am obliged to take a little after dinner.'

"How much do you take?" said he; "let me see."

"Only about a table-spoonful."

"Truly," said he, "that is not much; but one spoonful will soon lose its effect, and then you will take two; from two you will get to a full glass; and that, in like manner, by habituating yourself to it, will lose its effect, and then you will take two glasses; and so on, till in the end perhaps you will become a drunkard. Oh, my brother, take care what you do."

"Happy had it been if he had taken the timely warning of his friend John Wesley; but, alas! he trifled with his little drops until he became a drunkard, ruined his reputation, and at the time I had an interview with him he was a poor old miserable backslider, apparently within a few steps of the grave."

On another occasion it is said that when Wesley was on a visit to the Rev. John Fletcher, of Madeley, he saw Mrs. Fletcher offer wine to one of his preachers after preaching. He at once reproved her for so doing, and added, "What! madam, do you intend to kill my preachers?"

Holding such sentiments, we are not surprised at his giving such sensible advice as we find recorded in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1797, p. 487. He there says: "You see the wine when it sparkles in the cup, and are going to drink it; I tell you there is poison in it, and therefore beg you to throw it away! You answer, The wine is harmless in itself. I reply, Perhaps it is so; but still, if it be mixed with what is not harmless, no one in their senses, if he knows it—at least unless he could separate the good from the evil—will once think of drinking it. If you add, It is not poison to me, though it may

be to others ; then I say : Throw it away for thy brother's sake, lest thou embolden him to drink also. Why should thy strength occasion thy weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died ? Now, let any one judge who is the uncharitable person—he who pleads against the wine for his brother's sake, or he who pleads against the life of his brother for the sake of his wine.”

Among the sermons delivered by Wesley there is one on MONEY. It is divided into three suggestive heads.

1. Get all you can.    2. Save all you can.    3. Give all you can.

After describing the methods by which it is right to get money, he proceeds to point out some of the methods by which men *ought not* to do so. He there says : “ Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbour in his body : therefore we may not sell anything which tends to impair health. Such is eminently all that liquid fire, commonly called ‘ drams,’ or spirituous liquors. It is true these may have a place as medicine (although there would be rarely any occasion for them, were it not for the unskilfulness of the practitioner) ; therefore such as prepare and sell them only for this end may keep their conscience clear. But who are they who prepare them only for this end ? Do you know ten such distillers in England ? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way to any who will buy, are poisoners general. They murder His Majesty’s subjects by wholesale ; neither does their eye pity nor spare. They drive them to hell like sheep. And what is their gain ? Is it not the blood of these men ? Who then would envy their estates and sumptuous palaces ? A curse is in the midst of them. Blood, blood, is there ! The foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood. And canst thou hope, O thou man of blood ! though thou art clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day—canst thou hope to deliver down the fields of blood to the third generation ? Not so ; for there is a God in heaven : therefore thy name shall be rooted out, like as those whom thou hast destroyed body and soul ; thy memorial shall perish with thee.”

And if this be not clear and plain enough, take the following from the same sermon :

“ It is dear-bought gain, whatever is procured by hurting our neighbour in his soul ; by ministering—suppose directly or indirectly—to his unchastity or intemperance ; which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire to please Him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have anything to do with

taverns, victualling-houses, opera-houses, play-houses, or any other place of public fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent: but if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sins of various kinds, then, it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. Oh! beware, lest God should say in that day, 'These have perished in their iniquity; but their blood do I require at thy hands.'"

How scrupulous he was in enforcing the "Rules" may be gathered from the following extracts from his Journal, Sept. 6th, 1760: "In examining the Society, I found much reason to bless God on their behalf. They diligently observe all the Rules of the Society, with or without a preacher." Nov. 1st, 1762, in a letter to a preacher, he says: "I dislike your slighting any, the very least, Rules of the Society, and your doing anything that tends to hinder others from exactly observing them." And again, in reply to the question, "Are there any other advices which you would give the assistants (superintendents)?" he replies: "Vigorously, but calmly, enforce the Rule concerning needless ornaments, drams, snuff, tobacco, etc. Let no preacher touch either snuff or drams on any account. 'Eggs and wine,' and all spirituous liquors, after preaching especially, are deadly poisons." As Smith, in his "Life of Wesley," says of the Methodists, "As soon as they were members they were subject to rule; their continuance as members was contingent on their continued observance of the Rules to which, on their admission, they promised obedience."

That Wesley continued to hold these views as to discipline may be gathered from the following testimony: "The first time I had the pleasure of being in the company of the Rev. John Wesley," says a correspondent in the *New York Evangelist*, "was in the year 1783. I asked him what must be done to keep Methodism alive when he was dead; to which he immediately replied: 'The Methodists must take heed to their Doctrine, their Experience, their Practice, and their Discipline. If they attend to their Doctrines *only*, they will make the people *Antinomians*; if to the Experimental part of religion *only*, they will make them *Enthusiasts*; if to the Practical part *only*, they will make them *Pharisees*; and if they do not attend to their Discipline, they will be like persons who bestow much pains in cultivating their garden, and put no fence round it, to save it from the wild boar of the forest.'

## CHAPTER XVII.

*The Theologian.*

OVER and over again Wesley was accused of being an enemy to the Church of England, and preaching doctrines which were not laid down in her prayers, articles, and homilies. To these charges he never hesitated to make a direct denial. He however went so far as to admit that there were five points of difference between him and many of the clergy; but for this he contended he was not responsible, inasmuch as *they*, not *he*, were unfaithful to the Church. These points were as follows:

1. Those from whom he differed spoke of Justification either as the same thing with Sanctification, or as something consequent upon it. He believed it to be wholly distinct from sanctification, and necessarily antecedent to it.

2. They spoke of good works as the cause of Justification. He believed the death and righteousness of Christ to be the whole and sole cause of it.

3. They spoke of good works as existing previous to Justification. He believed that no good work is possible previous to justification, and that therefore no good work can be a condition of it: that until we are justified we are ungodly, and incapable of good works. We are justified by Faith alone, faith without works; faith producing all good works, yet including none.

4. They spoke of Sanctification as if it were an outward thing. He believed it to be an inward thing—the life of God in the soul of man: a participation in the Divine nature: the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

5. They spoke of the New Birth as synonymous with baptism; or, at most, a change from a vicious to a virtuous life. He believed it to be an entire change of nature, from the image of the devil, wherein we are born, to the image of God; a change from earthly and sensual to heavenly and holy affections. "There is therefore," says he, "a wide, essential, fundamental, irreconcilable difference between us. If they speak the truth as it is in Jesus, I am found 'a false witness before God.' But if I teach the way of God in truth, they are 'blind leaders of the blind.'" He further contends that he "simply described the plain, old religion of the Church of England, which was now almost everywhere spoken against under the name of Methodism."

It was in November, 1746, when Wesley was forty-three years of age, that he published his first volume of Sermons; and, as these, with the other three volumes and the "Notes on the New Testament," subsequently became and continue the standard of Methodist theology, it may be well just to take a passing glance at the Preface. He there states that these Sermons contained the substance of what he had preached during the previous eight years; and that there was no point of doctrine on which he was accustomed to speak which was not incidentally, if not professedly, laid before the reader. He says: "Nothing here appears in an elaborate, elegant, or oratorical dress. If it had been my desire or design to write thus, my leisure would not permit. But, in truth, I at present designed nothing less; for I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum*. I design plain truth for plain people; therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings; and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scripture. I have thought: 'I am a creature of a day. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God. I want to know one thing—the way to heaven. God Himself has condescended to teach me the way. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.' Here then [I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I read His book; for this end—to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights, and ask Him to let me know His will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach."

It may add to the interest of this Preface if we take into consideration the time and the circumstances when the work was commenced. It appears that in November, 1753, Wesley was visited with a very dangerous illness, arising from a cold which he caught at Leigh, Essex, where he had been preaching. Two days after, when in London, he "had a settled pain in his left breast, a violent cough, and a slow fever." Dr. Fothergill, a Quaker, and at that time one of the most popular physicians in town, was called in; and,



under God, was the means of saving his life: for Wesley says, "Dr. Fothergill told me plain I must not stay in town a day longer; adding, 'If anything does thee good, it must be the country air, with rest, asses' milk, and riding daily.'"

Acting upon this advice, Wesley was at once removed to the house of his friend, Mr. E. Blackwell, at Lewisham. On the evening of his arrival he wrote his epitaph, remarking, "Not knowing how it might please God to dispose of me, to prevent vile panegyric, I wrote as follows:—

Here lieth the Body  
of  
JOHN WESLEY,  
A Brand plucked out of the burning:  
Who died of a Consumption in the Fifty-first Year  
of his Age;  
not leaving, after his Debts are paid,  
Ten Pounds behind him:  
Praying,  
'God be merciful to me, an unprofitable Servant!'

He ordered that this, if any, inscription should be placed on his  
tombstone.

Notwithstanding this illness, which extended into the year 1754, we find that, invalid as he was, he on the first Sunday commenced writing his "Notes on the New Testament." Speaking of this, he says, "A work which I should scarce ever have attempted, had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or preach; and yet so well as to be able to read and write." It appears that this meant work after all, for with the exception of the time taken for exercise on horseback, two hours for meals, and one for private prayer, he spent sixteen hours a day on this important undertaking. His brother helped him for a few days in comparing the translation with the original, and in reading Dr. Heylyn's "Lectures" and Dr. Doddridge's "Expositor." He was able in ten weeks to complete his rough draft of the translation and the Notes on the four Gospels,—not a bad piece of work for a sick man.

The early part of the year he had thus to spend in comparative retirement. After four months' silence, he preached at Bristol in March; and from time to time in other places. On Whit Sunday he took the evening service at the Foundry; but writes, "I have not recovered my whole voice or strength: perhaps I never may; but let me use what I have." It will thus be evident that he could not be idle even when ill.

As we have seen elsewhere, Wesley very early adopted what are known as Arminian views; and to these he gave from time to time considerable attention: and if, as some of his critics have said, his intellect was more logical than philosophical, this no doubt aided very much in qualifying him for the great work he had to do. As one has said, "What was needed in the theological development of Methodism was clear, pointed definitions—rather than philosophical generalizations—of those elementary evangelical truths which are most essential to the personal salvation of men: for, in its positive bearing, Methodism was to be a spiritual, rather than a dogmatic or ecclesiastical, reform."

Of the cardinal truths Wesley certainly has proved himself to be an able exponent. Faith, Justification, Regeneration, Sanctification, the Witness of the Spirit, were the themes upon which he delighted to dwell; and no one who carefully reads what he has written can fail to understand the vast and paramount importance of these subjects.

At the same time it can be readily seen that from the varied character of the work in which Wesley was engaged, as well as in consideration of the numerous opponents with whom he had from time to time to contend, he was obliged to be prepared to give a reason for his conduct, and also to justify his opinions. Controversy, as such, he disliked. This may be easily inferred by noticing a remark he once made when replying to Lavington, Bishop of Exeter. He says of it: "Heavy work, such as I should never choose; but sometimes it must be done. Well might the ancient say, 'God made practical divinity necessary; the devil, controversial.' But it is necessary; we must resist the devil, or he will not flee from us."

While he was at Lincoln College he became noted, among other things, for his skill in logic. Six times a week disputations were held in the college, at which, he says, "I could not avoid acquiring some degree of expertness in arguing, and especially in discerning and pointing out well-covered and plausible fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art. By this, when men have hedged me in by what they call 'demonstrations,' I have been many times able to dash them in pieces; in spite of all its covers, to touch the very point where the fallacy lay, and it flew open in a moment." An illustration of this power we may gather from the following fact. In the course of his journeys (1746) Wesley found, both at Wednesbury and Birmingham, the

Antinomians had laboured hard to corrupt the Methodists. One of the former went to Birmingham to see Wesley, and the following dialogue took place:

*Wesley*.—"Do you believe you have nothing to do with the law of God?"

*Antinomian*.—"I have not; I am not under the law; I live by faith."

*W*.—"Have you, as living by faith, a right to everything in the world?"

*A*.—"I have. All is mine, since Christ is mine."

*W*.—"May you then take anything you will anywhere—suppose out of a ship, without the consent or knowledge of the owner?"

*A*.—"I may if I want it; for it is mine: only I will not give offence."

It is not our purpose to defend or to blame him for adopting Arminian views; all we wish to do, is to set forth the opinions which he himself held and endeavoured to promote. It was to extend these views among his followers that he ultimately projected and published the "Arminian Magazine" in 1778. But, tenacious as he was of his own opinions on this subject, to his honour be it said, he did not insist upon Arminian views as a condition of membership in his societies. All he required was, that disputes concerning them should not be obtruded into the devotional meetings; and when one who held Calvinistic opinions asked Wesley if his brother Charles did right in excluding him for holding such opinions, Wesley asked, "Which opinion?" "That of election," was the reply. "I hold," he continued, "that a certain number are elected from eternity; and they must and shall be saved; and the rest of mankind must and shall be damned. And I know also that other members of the Society hold the same opinions." Wesley replied that he never questioned their opinions; all he demanded was that they should "only not trouble others by disputing about them." "Nay, nay, but I will dispute about them," responded the Calvinist; "you are all wrong, and I am determined to set you right." "I fear," replied Wesley, "that your coming with this view will neither profit you nor us." "I will go then," was the answer, "and tell all the world that you and your brother are false prophets; and I tell you that in a fortnight you will all be in confusion."

What qualifications this worthy brother thought he possessed for accomplishing such a mighty revolution it is hard to tell, but

certainly that of being a prophet was not one of them; as subsequent events have proved.

This spirit of forbearance on the part of Wesley to those holding contrary opinions, however, had at length to be given up. One of his "helpers," John Cennick, publicly attacked Wesley's Arminianism at Kingswood, the place which afterwards became noted as the school for ministers' sons. To this, of course, Wesley had no alternative but to reply, in doing which he said, speaking of Kingswood School, "I bought the ground where it stands, and paid for building it, partly from the contributions of my friends, and partly from the income of my fellowship." He also had employed Cennick. Wesley therefore was very indignant at such conduct from a man whom he employed, and who thus was attempting to "supplant him in his own house." After several attempts to restore harmony had been made and failed, as Cennick turned obstinate, Wesley read a paper publicly declaring that "by the consent and approbation of the Band Society of Kingswood" Cennick and his followers, who had insisted on the right to "meet apart," "were no longer members thereof." When it was reported that it was not for strife or disorder that they were expelled, but for their opinions on election, Wesley replied "that they knew in their conscience this was not the case"; for there were several predestinarians in the Societies both in London and Bristol, and that he "never did yet put any out of either because they held that opinion."

These events led Wesley to the conclusion that it was time to protest against Calvinistic doctrines publicly; and we find that he at once began to deliver a series of sermons on the subject, under the titles of "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men," "Salvation by Faith," "Free Grace," etc. It will there be seen that on these subjects his mind was fully made up as to what he himself felt to be the truth; and to the end of his days he constantly and prominently made these subjects leading features of his sermons and writings.

Having thus clearly defined his opposition to the tenets of Calvin, he found that Calvinists of the more advanced type became his bitter opponents. Wesley replied both by tracts and sermons to the Antinomian teachers; and among other terse and vigorous things he said of them was this, "Surely these are the first-born children of Satan." There was no misunderstanding such language; and, if space permitted, it would be interesting to give other illustrations of the manner in which he dealt with those who called in question his verdict.

As another illustration of his anxiety to keep these subjects apart from conditions of membership with his societies, we find him writing in his Journal, 1745, "Oh that we may never make anything more or less the term of union with us, but the having the mind that was in Christ, and the walking as He walked!"

Writing in vindication of the great reformation which was being accomplished, he says: "The Methodists are in no wise bigoted to opinions. They do indeed hold opinions, but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any opinions as to think those alone will make them Christians, or to confine their affection or esteem to those who agree with them therein. There is nothing they are more fearful of than this, lest it should steal upon them unawares. They contend for nothing trifling, as if it were important; for nothing indifferent, as if it were necessary; but for everything in its own order."

He then goes on to ask his opponents whether they will resist a work of God like this. "If you say, 'Because you hold opinions which I cannot believe are true,' I answer, 'Believe them true or false; I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right towards God; that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbour, and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more.' I am sick of opinions; I am weary to hear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion: give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love. Let my soul be with these Christians, wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinions they are of. 'Whosoever' thus 'doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' Inexcusably infatuated must you be, if you can ever doubt whether the propagation of this religion be of God. Only more inexcusable are those unhappy men who oppose, contradict, and blaspheme it."

When we take into consideration the vast number of tracts and books he has written, illustrative of his views of theology, or in defence of his opinions, it is easy to understand how impossible it is to do justice to them all in our limited space. All we can say is this: he was a man of large-hearted sympathies, broad and liberal in his attitude to those who differed from him, while at the same



time he was fearless and earnest in his advocacy of the truths which he himself believed. Those truths may be briefly stated to be—that Christ died for all men; and that all, even the vilest, can be saved, if they will only accept Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life”: that wheresoever this is done its fruits will be shown forth in a life of purity and godliness, and a constant desire to grow in grace.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *The Exemplar.*

THE common saying among the parsons of the day when Wesley began his labours, “Do as I say, and not as I do,” will well illustrate the necessity for a different life among his preachers, if they were to be a power for good among the people. Hence we are not surprised to find that he was ever on the alert to illustrate by his own practice the principles he taught from the pulpit. Indeed, we may say that *self-denial* for the good of others was the leading feature of Wesley’s character. It marked more or less the whole of his career. It mattered not to him what it was which had to be given up, or what it was that he was required to do, with a promptness and a heartiness which always stamped his actions, he at once set about it. Many illustrations of this can be found, of which the following are but samples. In his “Journal” for October 20th, 1735, he says, “Believing the denying ourselves in the smallest instance might, by the blessing of God, be helpful to us, we wholly left off the use of flesh and wine.” July 6th, 1746: “After talking largely both with the men and women leaders, we agreed that it would prevent a great expense, as well of health as of time and of money, if the poorer people of our society could be persuaded to leave off drinking tea.<sup>1</sup> I expected some difficulty in breaking off a custom of six and twenty years’ standing; and accordingly the three first days my head ached more or less all day long, and I was half asleep from morning to night. The third day my memory failed almost entirely. In the evening I sought my remedy in prayer. On Thursday my headache was gone, my memory was as strong as ever; and I have found no inconvenience, but a sensible benefit in several respects from that very day to this.” He continued to

<sup>1</sup> Which at that time was several shillings a pound, and hence a severe tax upon the then limited wages of the poor.

abstain from tea for twelve years, until Dr. Fothergill ordered him to resume its use.

Quite in harmony with his Rules is the following extract from his sermons: "But what is self-denial? Wherein are we to deny ourselves? And whence does the necessity of this arise? I answer—the will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature; equally binding every angel in heaven, and every man upon earth. Nor can it be otherwise; this is the natural, necessary result of the relation between creatures and their Creator. But if the will of God be our one rule of action in everything, great and small, it follows, by undeniable consequence, that we are not to do our own will in anything. Here, therefore, we see at once the nature, with the ground and reason, of self-denial. It is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us. And we see the reason thereof, because we are creatures; because 'it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.'

"This reason for self-denial must hold even with regard to the angels of God in heaven; and with regard to man, innocent and holy as he came out of the hands of His Creator. But a further reason for it arises from the condition in which all men are since the Fall. We are all now 'shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us.' Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. On the other hand, it is the will of God that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times or in some things only, but at all times and in all things. Here, therefore, is a further ground for constant and universal self-denial.

"To illustrate this a little further. The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man, which once ran parallel with it, is now another path; not only different from it, but in our present state directly contrary to it: it leads from God. If, therefore, we walk in the one we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. Indeed, a man of faint heart and feeble hands may go in two ways, one after the other. But he cannot walk in two ways at the same time—follow his own will, and follow the will of God: he must choose the one or the other; denying God's will to follow his own; or denying himself to follow the will of God.

"Now, it is undoubtedly pleasing for the time to follow our own

will, by indulging, in any instance that offers, the corruption of our nature. But by following it in anything, we so far strengthen the perverseness of our will; and by indulging it we continually increase the corruption of our nature. So by the food which is agreeable to the palate, we often increase a bodily disease. It gratifies the taste; but it inflames the disorder. It brings pleasure; but it also brings death.

“On the whole, then—to deny ourselves is to deny our own will, when it does not fall into the will of God; and that however pleasing it may be. It is to deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to, God: that is, in effect, to refuse going out of our way, though it may be into a pleasant, flowery path; to refuse what we know to be deadly poison, though agreeable to the taste.”

As an illustration of Wesley's extreme simplicity of life, we quote an instance which occurred in connection with a resolution adopted by the Government in 1776, to the effect that circulars should be sent to all persons who were suspected of having plate on which they had not paid duty. The circular was as follows:—

“REVEREND SIR,—As the Commissioners cannot doubt that you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry, they have directed me to send you a copy of the Lords' order, and to inform you that they expect that you forthwith make the entry of all your plate, such entry to bear date from the commencement of the plate duty, or from such time as you have owned, used, had, or kept, any quantity of silver plate, chargeable by the Act of Parliament; as in default thereof, the Board will be obliged to signify your refusal to their Lordships. N.B.—An immediate answer is desired.”

Wesley's answer was as conclusive as it was speedy, as may be gathered from the following reply:—

“SIR,—I have two silver tea-spoons at London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.—I am, Sir, your most humble servant,  
“JOHN WESLEY.”

We need not therefore feel surprised when it is stated by those who knew him well, that a more charitable man rarely lived. His liberality knew no bounds, save an empty pocket. He gave away not merely a certain part of his income, but all that he had. When he had provided for his own simple wants—and they were, as we have seen, of the simplest character—he devoted the remainder to the necessities of others. Nor was this the work of a day or two.

He appears to have entered upon it at a very early period of his life. We are told that when he had thirty pounds a year, he lived upon twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings.<sup>1</sup> This went on; until in the fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived upon twenty-eight, and gave away to the poor ninety-two. During the course of fifty years it has been calculated that he must have given away more than thirty thousand pounds. Truly does Dr. Punshon say of him :

"*Simplicity* was indeed the great feature of his character, to which everything else must be referred as to a central motive power. From the time of his entrance upon his public work he was a man of one purpose. That purpose absorbed him; and against that purpose he would not harbour a thought that was disloyal. If ever man was perfectly devoted to the service of God it was he. He was a 'living sacrifice.' The usual and strong instincts which prevail among men, love of ease, fame, wealth, were almost trampled out of his soul. Even the fondest affections were crucified, though he had as warm a heart as ever beat in the breast of man; and, at the bidding of the high purpose which possessed him, he could surrender the dearest friend, and expend the costliest tribute, endure the keenest pang, and be unmoved under the foulest slander, with a courage which to us, who dwell in lower regions, seems well nigh stoical, and which we must breathe the upper air to understand."

The following is a characteristic illustration of this spirit :

A gentleman named Dudley was one evening taking tea with the eminent sculptor Culy, when the former was asked if he had ever seen Culy's gallery of busts; and on learning that he had not done so, and expressing at the same time a desire to be favoured with a view, Mr. Culy took him across to his studio. After admiring the busts of several great men of the day, he came to one which particularly struck him, and asked whose it was. Mr. Culy replied: "It is the likeness of John Wesley. Lord Shelburne has also been struck in the same manner; and as you are, I know, fond of a good anecdote, I will relate to you precisely in the same words what took place. 'My lord,' said I, 'perhaps you have heard of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodists.' 'Oh yes,' he replied; '*he—that race of fanatics.*' 'Well, my lord, Mr. Wesley had often been urged to have his portrait taken; but he always refused, alleging as a reason that he thought it nothing but vanity: indeed, so frequently had he been pressed on this point, that his friends were reluctantly compelled to give up the idea. One day he called on me on the business of our Church. I began the old subject of entreating him to allow me to take his likeness. 'Well,' said I, 'knowing you value money for the means of doing good, if you will grant my

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 27 and 28.

request, I will engage to give you ten guineas for the first ten minutes that you sit, and for every minute that exceeds that time you shall receive another guinea.' "What!" said Mr. Wesley; "do I understand you aright, that you will give me ten guineas for having my picture taken? Well, I agree to it." He then stripped off his coat and lay on the sofa; and in eight minutes I had the most perfect bust I had ever taken. He then washed his face; and I counted ten guineas into his hand. "Well," said he, turning to his companion, "I never till now earned money so speedily. But what shall I do with it?" He then wished me good morning. But on passing over Westminster Bridge with his friend he saw a poor woman crying bitterly, with three children clinging to her, each sobbing, though apparently too young completely to understand their mother's grief. On inquiry Wesley found that the creditors were dragging her husband to prison, after having sold all his effects; which had proved too little by eighteen shillings to cover their demands, and which they declared they would have. One of the guineas made her a happy woman; and they proceeded on their way, followed by the blessings of the now happy mother.

"While on their way Mr. Wesley asked his friend Mr. Barton if he knew of the most likely place where the money would be of the greatest service; and on learning that Giltspur-street Prison would be the spot, they repaired thither; and on asking the turnkey to point out the most miserable object under his care, he answered, If they were in search of poverty they need not go far. The first ward they entered they were struck with the appearance of a poor wretch who was greedily eating some potato skins. On being asked how it was that he was there, he replied that he had been confined for a debt of half a guinea for several months, without any hope of release. On hearing this Mr. Wesley gave him a guinea, and had the pleasure of seeing the poor fellow leave with half a guinea in his pocket to help him to meet his pressing necessities at home. As the poor man however was going out he said, 'Gentlemen, if you are in search of poverty, pray go upstairs, if it is not too late.'

"They immediately took his advice, and proceeded in search; and soon met with a sight which called forth all their compassion. On a low stool, with his back toward them, sat a man, or rather a skeleton, for he was literally nothing but skin and bone; his hand supported his head, and his eyes seemed riveted on the opposite corner of the chamber, where lay stretched on a pallet of straw a young woman in the last stage of consumption, apparently lifeless, with an infant by her side, which was quite dead. Mr. Wesley immediately sent a medical man; but it was too late for the unfortunate woman, who expired a few hours afterwards 'from starvation,' as the doctor declared. You may imagine, my lord, that the remaining eight guineas would not go far in aiding such distress as that. No expense, however, was spared for the relief of the only surviving sufferer. But so extreme was the weakness to which he was reduced, that six weeks elapsed before he could speak sufficiently to relate his own history.

"It then appeared that he had been a respectable merchant, and had married a beautiful young lady, highly accomplished, and whom he almost idolized. For a time they lived happily together, until the failure of a speculation in which his whole property was embarked ruined him. No sooner did he become acquainted with his loss than he called all his creditors together and laid before them the state of his affairs, showing them his books, which were kept in the most perfect order. They all were willing to accept his dividend, except a lawyer, who had



to thank the merchant for being the cause of his success in the world. He insisted upon the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds being paid, or he would have the merchant sent to gaol. In vain the other creditors urged him to have pity, to consider the great respectability of the debtor, and the terrible sorrow it would bring upon the wife. But in spite of all their pleadings and remonstrances he was hurried away to prison, followed by his weeping wife. For a time, by her accomplishments, she was able to provide for their daily wants, and to lay aside a little towards the time of her confinement. But so long an illness followed this event, that it left her completely disabled; and as a result, after pawning and selling their clothes and whatever else they could part with, they were at last reduced to absolute starvation. Things had reached this crisis when Mr. Wesley with his friend entered the room; and as he was never in the habit of doing things by halves, he at once made himself acquainted with all the facts, and went to the creditors to let them know how the matter stood. They were each surprised beyond measure to learn what had taken place; for so long a time had elapsed since they had heard of the merchant, that they supposed he must either have left the country, or had died. Among the rest upon whom he called was the lawyer, and painted to him in the most glowing terms the wretchedness he had witnessed, and which had resulted from the arbitrary manner with which he had pressed for the payment of the amount due to him. Even this did not move the lawyer to compassion; but, on the contrary, he declared the merchant should not be allowed to leave the prison without paying him every farthing. Mr. Wesley then visited the other creditors, who, considering the great suffering the poor man had endured, agreed among them to raise the amount needful to effect the release. Some gave one hundred, others two hundred; and one, three hundred pounds; and so he was delivered from prison.

"The affairs of the merchant gradually improved; things began to prosper with him. In the second year he called his creditors together again, and thanked them for their great kindness, and paid them back again the sums they had so generously advanced. God continued to prosper his efforts, so that he was enabled to pay all his debts, and afterwards to realize considerable property. His great trials had meantime produced such a deep impression on his own mind that he resolved to do all he could to remove the possibility of others suffering from the same cause; and for this purpose he advanced a considerable sum as a foundation fund for the relief of small debtors. And strange to say, the very first person who applied for and obtained of the same was the *inexorable lawyer*."

It is only needful to add that this remarkable fact entirely convinced Lord Shelburne of the mistaken opinion he had formed of Mr. Wesley.

Take another case, which helps to explain the secret of his power among those who knew him best, even down to the latest period of his work and labour among them. It is said that a few months before his death, when he was breakfasting one Sunday morning in London with several preachers, one of them had occasion to reprove another for something which was deemed improper. The rebuke was not so kindly taken as perhaps it should have been; and the person reproved, who sat next to Wesley, turned to the

venerable leader and said, "Sir, I do not think it right for a junior brother to speak in this way to a senior." Wesley immediately stood up, and looking with benignity and affection upon those around him, who were mostly young men, said, "If any of my younger brethren know anything amiss in me, I will thank them to tell me of it." A reply which put an end to further complaints, and one worthy of a true man of God, then in his eighty-eighth year.

On another occasion it is related of him, that to an indolent preacher he gave the following appropriate admonition:

"Your talent in preaching does not increase; it is about the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep: there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading alone can supply this, with daily meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. Oh, begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not; what is tedious at first will afterward be pleasant. . . . Read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way. Else you will be a trifer all your days, and a pretty, superficial reader. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer."

One more testimony to his influence may be added; it is that of the celebrated John Howard, who devoted his life to the work of prison reform. One day he met Wesley in Dublin, and had a long talk with him about the work in which he was engaged. Speaking of this interview afterwards to Alexander Knox, he said: "I was encouraged by him to go on vigorously with my own designs. I saw in him how much a single man might achieve by zeal and perseverance; and I thought, Why may not I do as much in my own way as Mr. Wesley has done in his,—if I am only as assiduous and persevering?"

That he was ever on the watch for opportunities of doing good no one who reads his "Journal" can doubt; and yet after all many instances of a most interesting character, which occurred in connection with his daily life, are passed over or referred to by him in a very incidental manner, showing that he was more intent upon doing his work than upon recording his labours. Take the following as samples: A lady once said to Wesley, "Suppose that you knew you were to die at twelve o'clock to-morrow night, how would you spend the intervening time?" "How, madam?" he replied, "why, just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five to-morrow morning. After that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the

Societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's, who expects to entertain me; converse, and pray with the family as usual; retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."

Dr. Adam Clarke gives in his manuscripts an interesting tribute to Wesley's belief in the power of prayer, when he says: "My mother," observes Mrs. D'Orme, "was on terms of friendship with Mr. Wesley. When she was called to undergo, what was then an unprecedented operation, the taking the right arm off at the shoulder, or rather, out of the dislocation, Wesley wrote to several of the Societies, requesting them to make the day on which the operation was to be performed a day of special prayer on her behalf. The Lord heard their supplications. When she was supposed to be dead, and she was being carried out of the room, she burst forth in the praises of God, which so impressed those who were carrying her, that one of them turned to the Lord, and became a serious Christian. Afterwards she married, and had five children; and was uncommonly active with her left hand, in sewing, writing, ironing, and making pastry. I well remember one day, when soliciting Mr. Wesley to partake of a fruit pie, that she said, 'It has been made without *hands*,' meaning that she had made it with her only one, the left."

On reaching Londonderry in 1765, Wesley did not know what to do, inasmuch as he was ignorant of the place where the preacher lodged, and was also unacquainted with any one in the town. While he stood musing over the matter, uncertain what to do, a Christian gentleman, named Alexander Knox, a member of the Corporation, passing on horseback, noticed him, and asked his name. The result was that Knox took Wesley to his house; and on the Sunday the latter accompanied his host to church, where he had a seat assigned to him next to the mayor. Mr. Knox's hospitality was extended for a fortnight, and resulted in him and his wife joining Wesley's "Society"; though they left it at a later period. The high opinion Mr. Knox entertained of John Wesley is evidenced by his own words, as follows: "He was devotedly pious, and disinterestedly kind. In his views of religion he was as enlarged as a Scriptural Christian could be, regarding every person as within the circle of God's paternal love and mercy in Christ, except such only as by wilful sin exclude themselves. It was his fixed belief that our reconciliation to God depended on no doctrinal views, but merely on a sincere and thorough turning of the heart from sin to holiness,

and a fixed disposition to bear the yoke of Christ and learn of Him. According to him, the real commencement of such a temper is also the epocha of averted wrath, though the sensible enjoyment of spiritual peace and comfort may not as yet be afforded; such peace and comfort, he thought, could only arise from an inward manifestation of God's love in the redemption of the world by His Son."

However widely Whitefield differed from Wesley in his views of truth, there is every reason to believe that he entertained the most unquestionable confidence in his integrity and goodness. This was well tested on one occasion, when a certain minister who was very liberal in his reflections on Mr. Wesley and his followers, expressed to Mr. Whitefield his doubts as to Mr. Wesley's salvation, by asking, "Sir, do you think when *we* get to heaven we shall see Mr. Wesley?" To which Mr. Whitefield replied, "No, sir, I fear not; for he will be so near the throne, and we shall be at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him."

Nor was this the only testimony. Over and over again his character, actions, and opinions were freely discussed—as is the usual thing with all men who are publicly known—sometimes with a desire to disparage, and at others to exalt. It is related that on one occasion a lady addressed herself to Dr. Adam Clarke on hearing him refer to Mr. Wesley, and asked, "Was not Mr. Fletcher, doctor, a holier man than Mr. Wesley?" The doctor lifted up his hand, and in his own nervous manner said: "No, no; there was no man like John Wesley. There was no man whom God could trust with the work he had to do, but John Wesley. There were prejudices here, and prejudices there; but his prejudices always gave way to the force of truth." He continued: "The personal religion sufficient for Mr. Fletcher, in his limited sphere, was far beneath that deep intimacy with God necessary for Mr. Wesley in the amazing labour he had to undergo; the persecution he had to face; the calumnies he had to endure; his fightings without; the oppositions arising from members of Society within; and his care of all the Churches."

Wesley was one day walking along a road with a Christian man who was relating his troubles, and at the same time saying he did not know what he should do. As his companion was expressing his doubts they happened to pass a stone fence over which a cow was looking. "Do you know," asked Wesley, "why that cow looks over that wall?" "No," replied the friend in trouble. "I will tell

you," answered Wesley: "because she cannot look *through* it. And that is what you must do with your troubles: look *over*, and *above* them."

That he did not merely preach but also practise this kind of thing may be gathered from the following interesting testimony which he gives us in a letter to Rev. Thomas Stedman, dated August 13th, 1774, where Wesley among other things very graphically expresses his own sentiments upon the influence which public criticism had upon him, in the following manner:

"For nearly fifty years I have been called to go through evil report and good report; and, indeed, the latter without the former would be 'a test for human frailty too severe.' But when one balances the other, all is well. The north wind prevents the ill effect of the sunshine; and the providence of God has, in this respect, been highly remarkable. Reproach came first from men of no character either for learning or religion, though they had sense and learning; and afterwards, from men that were eminent for religion and learning too. But then we were old weather-beaten soldiers, so that a storm of that kind did not affright us; neither did it surprise us at all; as we had long weighed that word, which we know must be fulfilled, 'If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household!'"



## CHAPTER XIX.

### The President.

It has been truly said that some are born to rule. This was the case with Wesley; although it must not for a single moment be considered that he exercised authority because he either sought or loved to do so. He was compelled by the force of circumstances over and over again to act as a ruler, whether he wished to do so or not. Whatever men may say or think of what he did, or of the way he did many things, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt about this—his motives were pure from first to last. Indications all through his life can be found, turning up in the most natural and simple manner, which prove conclusively that if he did act at times as a despot, or even as a pope, it was because he felt that the circumstances demanded it. And never for a single moment were his actions governed by the thought that, in doing what he did, he



was showing forth his power towards the people who were associated with him in the great work to which he felt himself called.

When we consider that he occupied the chair as President for forty-seven years, and that during that period he travelled a quarter of a million of miles, mostly on horseback or in a carriage, and preached from forty to fifty thousand sermons, we must feel that no record can give anything like an idea of the prodigious labour he performed, or of the self-sacrificing spirit and indomitable perseverance with which he must have been possessed. If to his other labours, we add the multitude of his writings, his countless visits, the manifold subjects which passed under his notice, the varied character of the matters to which he gave his attention, and upon which he pronounced his opinions—often far in advance of his contemporaries—we shall feel surprised to find that he made so few mistakes; that his judgment was respected, and his decisions regarded with reverence. His own views as to his position as a Ruler are very clearly stated in a letter written in 1779, when he was seventy-six years of age. He says:

“You seem likewise to have quite a wrong idea of a Conference. For above six years after my return to England, there was no such thing. I then desired some of my preachers to meet me, in order to advise, not control, me. And you may observe, they had no power at all, but what I exercised through them. I chose to exercise the power which God had given me in this matter, both to avoid ostentation, and gently to habituate the people to obey them when I should be taken from their head. But as long as I remain with them, the fundamental rule of Methodism remains inviolate. As long as any preacher joins with me, he is to be directed by me in his work.”

Thus it will be seen Wesley claims all the power of a pope without seeming to know it. Rightly therefore does Mr. Tyerman say, “With all due deference to Wesley, Methodism now was not wholly the work of Wesley, nor was it wholly dependent upon him.” Because at the very time he wrote the foregoing words, he was surrounded by a band of men whose preaching and other powers were, beyond dispute, extending the influence of Methodism.

Let us glance at the origin, character, and scope of these Conferences over which Wesley presided with so much wisdom, tact, and power. Wesley invited his brother Charles and four other clergymen, and also four lay-preachers to meet with him. This was the

first Conference. It was opened on Monday, June 25th, 1744, and lasted five days. It was held at the Foundry, London. The day before it commenced a love-feast was held, at which six ordained ministers were present. During the day the sacrament was administered to between two and three thousand members of the London "Society," at which five clergymen assisted. The Conference began by recording their desire "that all things might be considered as in the immediate presence of God; that they might meet with a single eye, and as little children who had everything to learn; that every point which was proposed might be examined to the foundation; that every person might speak freely whatever was in his heart; and that every question which might arise should be thoroughly debated and settled." They observed that there was no reason to be afraid of doing this, lest they should overturn their first principles: for if they were false, the sooner they were overturned the better; if they were true, they would bear the strictest examination. With regard to the judgment of the majority, they agreed that, in speculative things, each could only submit so far as his judgment should be convinced, and that, in every practical point, each would submit, so far as he could without wounding his conscience. They thus laid the foundation for union in sentiment without violating the principle of private judgment. As an illustration of the scope of their deliberations the day after the opening of the Conference the following points were debated: 1. What to teach. 2. How to teach. 3. How to regulate doctrine, discipline, and practice.

With reference to Wesley's soundness of judgment on matters wherein difference of opinion occurred, it is said that in a controversy at one of these Conferences, when the question was asked: Whether it was proper to keep a person in Society who held Calvinistic opinions? after listening to the arguments for and against the matter, Wesley dismissed the subject by saying, "My dear brethren, I consider that I have no more right to quarrel with a man for holding different opinions from mine, than I have a right to quarrel with a man for wearing a wig, while I wear my own hair; but if he were to come and shake his powder about my eyes, I should consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible."

Speaking of Conscience Wesley is equally clear and emphatic. He says: "Can it be denied that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear as soon as the understanding opens—as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not every one begin to know that there is a difference between good

and evil, how imperfect soever the varied circumstances of this sense of good and evil may be? Does not every man for instance, know, unless blinded by the prejudices of education (like the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope), that it is good to honour his parents? Do not all men, however uneducated or barbarous, allow it is right to do to others as we would have them do to us? And are not all who know this condemned in their own minds when they do anything contrary thereto?—as, on the other hand, when they act suitably thereto, they have the approbation of their own consciences.”

Again, when speaking of others who differed from them he says: “Be not content with not forbidding any that cast out devils. It is well to go thus far; but do not stop there. If you will avoid all *bigotry*, go on. In every instance, whatever the instrument be, acknowledge the finger of God. And not only acknowledge, but rejoice in His work, and praise His name with thanksgiving. Encourage whomsoever God is pleased to employ to give himself wholly up thereto. Speak well of him wheresoever you are. Defend his character and his mission. Enlarge, as far as you can, his sphere of action. Show him all kindness in word and deed; and cease not to cry to God in his behalf, that he may save both himself and them that hear him.”

The first Conference, among other things, expressed the belief that the design of God in raising up the Methodists, was to reform the nation, more particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness through the land. Rules were adopted for the guidance of the lay-assistants: the clergy to preach in churches; field-preaching to be used sparingly: and other matters were dealt with bearing upon the conduct of the members in their daily life.

The next Conference was held at Bristol, in August, 1745. It was there resolved “that every one might speak freely whatever was on his heart; and that no one should be checked either by word or look, even though what he was saying was entirely wrong.” A capital principle, which it would be well to adopt in all assemblies of a similar character. The doctrines of Justification and Assurance were considered; the question of Church government; and other matters. Besides the two Wesleys, only one clergyman was present, with six itinerants. The next year they again reviewed the doctrines, to “guard against error and abuse.” The country was divided into circuits. At the Con-

ference in 1753, it was resolved that any Methodist marrying an unbeliever should be expelled the Society. In 1755, after a three days' discussion by the Conference, it was resolved that whether it was *lawful* or not, it was not *expedient* for the Methodists to separate from the Established Church. Over and over again the same topic came up for consideration. At other Conferences the doctrine of Entire Sanctification was stated: connexional funds sanctioned and recommended: a trust deed for chapels supplied: discipline for preachers and people prescribed: men and women directed to "sit apart" everywhere: etc., etc.

Wesley at the Conference held in Manchester, in 1765, thus clearly sets forth his work: "God thrust me and my brother out utterly against our will, to raise a HOLY people. Holiness was our point—inward and outward holiness. When Satan could not otherwise prevent this, he threw *Calvinism* in our way; and then *Antinomianism*. Then many Methodists grew *rich*, and thereby lovers of the present world. Next they married unawakened or half-awakened wives, and conversed with their relations. Thence worldly prudence, maxims, customs, crept back among us, producing more and more *conformity to the world*. Then there followed gross neglect of *relative duties*, especially education of the children. This is not cured by the preachers. Either they have not light, or not weight enough. But the want of these may be in some measure supplied by publicly reading the 'Sermons' [Wesley's]; especially the fourth, which supplies the remedies."

Evidently Wesley was a man who cultivated the habit of speaking and writing plainly to any one who needed to be specially addressed. Take for instance the following pointed letter to Rev. John King:

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—Always take advice or reproof as a favour: it is the surest mark of love. I advised you once, and you took it as an affront; nevertheless I will do it once more. Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can; but do not scream. Speak with all your heart; but with moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not cry.' The word properly means, 'He shall not *scream*.' Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently; but I never scream; I never strain myself: I dare not. I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul. Perhaps one reason why that good man Thomas Walsh, yea, and John Manners too, were in such grievous darkness before they died, was because they shortened their own lives. Oh, John, pray for an advisable and tractable temper! By nature you are very far from it. You are stubborn and headstrong. Your last letter was written in a very wrong spirit. If you cannot take advice from others, surely you might take it from your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY."

When needful Wesley could be noble in his reproofs, as may be gathered from the following incident. Joseph Bradford was for many years his travelling companion, and considered no assistance to him as too servile; but unfortunately he was subject to certain changes of temper. Wesley one day directed him to carry a packet of letters to the post; but Bradford wished before doing so to hear Wesley's sermon. Wesley was urgent, and insisted upon his going; but Bradford refused. "Then," said Wesley, "you and I must part." "Very good, sir," replied Bradford. They both slept over it. Next morning when Wesley met his friend, he asked him if he had considered what he had said, that "they must part." "Yes, sir," was Bradford's reply. "And must we part?" inquired Wesley. "Please yourself," was the reply. "Will you ask my pardon?" rejoined Wesley. "No, sir." "You won't?" "No, sir." "Then I will ask yours," replied the great man; and such was the influence of his mild rebuke upon Bradford that he wept like a child.

At the time of the Conference in 1766 Mr. Wesley was apprehensive that his death was near. He was in doubt whether he should live to see the next assembly. He saw in the character of the people many defects which he desired to be removed; and he charged the preachers to pay particular attention to every part of their work. Amongst other things, he said: "What avails preaching *alone*, though we could preach like angels? I heard Dr. Luften say: 'My father, visiting one of his parishioners, who had never missed going to church for forty years, then lying on his death-bed, asked him, "Thomas, where do you think your soul will go to?" "Soul! soul!" said Thomas. "Yes; do not you know what your soul is?" "Ay, surely," said he; "why, it is a little bone in the back, that lives longer than the rest of the body."' So much Thomas had learned by often hearing sermons, yea, and exceeding good sermons, for forty years! We must instruct them from house to house. Till this is done, and that in good earnest, the Methodists will be little better than other people.

"Go into every house in course, and teach every one therein, young and old, if they belong to us, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly. Make every particular plain to their understanding. Fix it in their memory. Write it on their heart. In order to this, there must be line upon line, precept upon precept. I remember to have heard my father asking my mother, 'How could you have the patience to tell that blockhead the same thing twenty times over?' She answered, 'Why, if I had but told him nineteen times, I should



have lost all my labour.' What patience indeed, what love, what knowledge is required for this !”

In 1769 the Conference seriously considered what was best to be done to perpetuate Methodism after Wesley's death. Among other things, with his usual foresight of their difficulties and dangers, he advised :

“On notice of my death, let all the preachers in England and Ireland repair to London within six weeks. Let them seek God by solemn fasting and prayer. Let them draw up articles of agreement, to be signed by those who choose to act in concert. Let those be dismissed who do not choose it in the most friendly manner possible. Let them choose by votes a committee of three, five, or seven, each of whom is to be moderator in his turn. Let the committee do what I do now : propose preachers to be tried, admitted, or excluded ; fix the place of each preacher for the ensuing year, and the time of the next Conference.”

He then asks whether something like the following points could not even then be adopted :

“We whose names are underwritten, being thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a close union between those whom God is pleased to use as instruments in this glorious work, in order to preserve this union between ourselves, are resolved, God being our helper, (1) *To devote ourselves entirely to God*; denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, steadily aiming at one thing—to save our own souls, and them that hear us. (2) *To preach the old Methodist doctrines*, and no other, contained in the Minutes of the Conferences. (3) *To observe and enforce the whole Methodist discipline*, laid down in the said Minutes.” These, at the Conference in 1773, were adopted in consequence of Wesley having failed to get the Rev. J. Fletcher, of Madeley, to be his successor. In 1775 he had the serious task of directing the Conference in the midst of the great American rebellion.

The Conference of 1777 was remarkable for the visit of Rev. J. Fletcher. His appearance was accompanied by a most striking illustration of Wesley's power. As Fletcher entered, feeble, emaciated, and ghost-like, leaning on the arm of the friend at whose house he was seeking the restoration of his health, the whole assembly stood up, while Wesley advanced to meet his almost angelic friend. While the apparently dying man addressed them one and all were bathed in tears. Wesley, fearing the excitement might be too much for Fletcher, knelt down and began to pray, and all present

followed his example. Wesley prayed that his friend might be spared a little longer, and at length exclaimed, with an emphasis which thrilled every heart, "He shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." And so it proved, for it was not until eight years after that he passed away to the bright world above. At the Conference in 1781 Wesley preached in the parish church, Leeds; and at the Lord's Supper there were about eleven hundred communicants, the ordinance being administered by Wesley and ten other ministers. Again, in 1784, five clergymen assisted Wesley to administer the Lord's Supper to sixteen or seventeen hundred persons. These are significant facts, illustrative of the growth and spiritual character of the work.

Hitherto the deeds of chapels and preachers' houses had conveyed them to trustees for the use of such preachers as Wesley and his brother Charles should send to them; and, after their death, of such as the Conference should appoint. But the annual gathering of preachers, known as the "Conference," possessed no legal status; and it became necessary that this should in some way be obtained. Accordingly Wesley had, five months previous to the assembling of the Conference of 1784, executed a carefully prepared instrument, known as the "Deed of Declaration," which was duly enrolled in the High Court of Chancery. Its object is to explain the words, "Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists," and to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof is to be continued. It gives the power to a hundred Methodist preachers of "determining, irrespective of trustees, societies, and congregations, who shall be the officiating ministers in the thousands of chapels occupied by Methodist societies, at home and abroad, throughout the United Kingdom and throughout the world." No wonder Mr. Tyerman adds: "This is an unexampled power; and the ministers invested with it ought to feel that they have a corresponding responsibility to God and His Church. High is the honour; the responsibility is fearful. If Methodism should ever fail in its duty, or fall to pieces, they, above all men else, must bear the blame."

In the year 1788 Wesley issued "The Sunday Service of the Methodists, with other Occasional Services." This was in reality a revised and altered edition of the Prayer-Book of the Church of England.

The last Conference he attended was at Bristol in 1790, when he was eighty-seven years old. One writing of him says: "Mr.

Wesley appeared very feeble; his eyesight had failed so much, that he could not see to give out the hymns; yet his voice was strong, his spirits remarkably lively, and the powers of his mind, and his love towards his fellow-creatures, were as bright and as ardent as ever." It was reported that there were throughout the world 240 Methodist Circuits; 541 Itinerant Preachers; and 134,549 members. Such had been the marvellous results attending his labours!

He continued travelling, writing, and preaching, up to February 17th, 1791, when, after preaching at Lambeth and returning home, he seemed to be unwell, having, as he said, taken cold. On the 18th he preached at Chelsea in the evening from the words: "The king's business requireth haste," but was obliged to pause once or twice to tell the people his cold affected his voice. On Tuesday, February 22nd, in great feebleness and with much difficulty he entered the City-road Chapel pulpit for the last time, and delivered his final message. The next day, at Leatherhead, the man who in fifty years had travelled no less than TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND MILES, chiefly on horseback or in his carriage, and delivered FIFTY THOUSAND DISCOURSES, preached his last sermon on "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him, while He is near." During the next few days he read, wrote, and preached; and among others he sent a letter to Wilberforce on Slavery, in which he says, "Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it."

The last days of his career were worthy of his pure and disinterested labours. His death was one of the most glorious and happy in the annals of the Christian Church. Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving were ever on his lips, until he, at length, gradually, peacefully, and triumphantly, passed away.

On the Sunday after his last sermon he was too weak to work, but seemed better, got up, sat in his chair, and with his habitual cheerfulness quoted from one of his brother's hymns, "Forsake me not when my strength faileth," the stanza—

"Till glad I lay this body down,  
Thy servant, Lord, attend!  
And oh, my life of mercy crown  
With a triumphant end!"

Soon after he uttered with peculiar emphasis the words of Christ, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Trying to speak he found it impossible, and was obliged to lie upon his bed. Friends around

him prayed, and he responded the "Amen" with his usual fervour.

When at Bristol he had said, in allusion to his illness there in 1753, "My words were—

" 'I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me!'"

He was asked, "Is that your language now?" "Yes," he said; 'Christ is all! He is all. I will go!' The evening came on. "How necessary it is," he exclaimed, "for every one to be on the right foundation!—

" 'I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me!'"

We must be justified by faith, and then go on to full sanctification." The next day his weakness increased, and he was drowsy. "There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus," he said, in a low but distinct voice. Shaking off the languor of his disease, he said three or four times during the day, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Dr. Whitehead wished for further assistance; but Wesley said, "Dr. Whitehead knows my constitution better than any one; I am quite satisfied, and will have no one else." It was evident to all he was beginning to pass away. On the Tuesday, after a restless night, being asked if he suffered pain, he replied, "No!" and began to sing another of his brother's lyrics:

"All glory to God in the sky,  
And peace upon earth be restored;  
O Jesus, exalted on high,  
Appear, our omnipotent Lord,  
Who, meanly in Bethlehem born,  
Didst stoop to redeem a lost race;  
Once more to Thy people return,  
And reign in Thy kingdom of grace!

Oh, wouldst Thou again be made known,  
Again in Thy Spirit descend;  
And set up, in each of Thine own,  
A kingdom that never shall end.  
Thou only art able to bless,  
And make the glad nations obey,  
And bid the dire enmity cease,  
And bow the whole world to Thy sway."

His voice failed here. He asked for pen and ink; but his hand had lost its cunning. "Shall I write for you?" said a friend. "Tell me what you wish to say." "Nothing," he replied, "but that *God is with us.*"

During the forenoon he surprised his friends by saying, "I will get up"; and while they were arranging his clothes he began to sing the rapturous hymn—

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past  
While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures.

Happy the man whose hopes rely  
On Israel's God: He made the sky,  
And earth, and seas, with all their train;  
His truth for ever stands secure,  
He saves the oppressed, He feeds the poor,  
And none shall find His promise vain."

Later still he tried to speak, but could only say in broken accents, "Nature is—Nature is——." One of the attendants added, "Nearly exhausted; but you are entering into a new nature, and into the society of the blessed spirits." "Certainly," he responded, clasping his hands, and exclaiming, "Jesus." His voice again failed, and though his lips moved nothing could be heard. Once more in a weak voice he said, "Lord, Thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those that cannot; speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest the tongue." Raising his voice he again began to sing what proved to be his last song on earth—

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
Who sweetly all agree."

But here his voice again failed, and he could proceed no further. After gasping for breath he said, "Now we have all done; let us all go." The ruling passion was strong in death; he evidently supposed he was dismissing one of his assemblies.

Thoroughly exhausted he was again put to bed, where, after a short sleep, he opened his eyes, and addressing the weeping friends around him, he said, "*Pray and praise*": at once they all knelt around him; and says one of them, "the room seemed filled with the Divine presence." A second time they knelt in like manner, and his fervent responses showed that he was yet able to share their devotions. He uttered an emphatic "Amen" to a part of the prayer which alluded to the perpetuation and universal spread of the doctrine to which he had devoted his life. On rising from prayer he took leave of each of them by the hand, saying, "Farewell! Farewell!"

Shortly afterwards another visitor entered. Wesley after a time collected his strength, and exclaimed, "The best of all is—God is with us!" And then after another pause, lifting his arm in triumph, he again repeated, "The best of all is—God is with us!" He noticed a group of persons around his bed; but owing to his sight failing he was unable to recognize them, and he inquired, "Who are these?" "Sir," replied Mr. Rogers, who, with his wife, ministered to him in his last moments, "sir, we are come to rejoice with you. You are going to receive your crown." "It is the Lord's doing," replied Wesley; "and it is marvellous in our eyes."

On being informed that his brother's widow had come to see him, he tried to kiss her, and said, "He giveth His servants rest." She wetted his lips, and he repeated his constant thanksgiving after



meals: "We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all Thy mercies. Bless the Church and King; and grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever and ever!" During the night he over and over again repeated such sentences as these: "The clouds drop fatness," "The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge!" "Pray and praise!" During the night he attempted to sing the same words he had sung the preceding day; but he could only utter—

"I'll praise!—I'll praise!—"

"Farewell!" was the last word he spoke; and the sublime scene was closed. His spirit took its flight on Wednesday, March 2nd, 1791, and the marvellous and unparalleled career of John Wesley in this world was ended.

Behind the chapel in the City Road his remains were interred on the 9th March. Such was the intense interest connected with this event, that arrangements had to be made within twelve hours of the funeral for it to take place at five o'clock in the morning; and although the notice to the friends was so short, hundreds attended. To each one was given a biscuit, in an envelope, engraven with a beautifully executed portrait of the departed saint dressed in canonicals, surmounted by a halo and a crown. But it may with truthfulness be said that however highly his own friends may think or speak of him, the Christian world at large will not willingly let his memory die; for although his name is mainly associated with the religious body who bear it, yet, as Lord Macaulay justly remarks,

"He was a man whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have rendered him eminent in literature; whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu; and who devoted all his powers, in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered the highest good of his species."

And this, in our judgment, has rarely been done before or since, by any one so completely as by

John Wesley.

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